IMPERFECT HISTORIES

THE ELUSIVE PAST AND THE LEGACY OF ROMANTIC HISTORICISM

ANN RIGNEY

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The Elusive Past and the Legacy of Romantic Historicism

ANN RIGNEY

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ITHACA AND LONDON

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For Anna

and Paddy

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He felt sleepy, he felt somewhat cold. Having unwound his turban, he looked at himself in a metal mirror. I do not know what his eyes saw, because no historian has ever described the forms of his face. I do know that he disappeared suddenly, as if fulminated by an invisible fire, and with him disappeared the houses and the unseen fountain.

—Jorge Luis Borges, *Averroes's Search*

And if one asked her, longing to pin down the moment with date and season, But what were you doing on the fifth of April 1868, or the second of November 1875, she would look vague and say she could remember nothing. For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children sent to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it. And the novels, without meaning to, inevitably lie.

—Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

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A short essay called "Adapting History to the Novel," *New Comparison* 8 (1989), 127–43, turned out to be the starting point for this book and has been integrated into Chapter 1. Parts of Chapter 2 appeared as "Relevance, Revision, and the Fear of Long Books," in *A New Philosophy of History,* edited by Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (London: Reaktion Books, 1995); another source for Chapter 2 was an essay in Dutch, "De stiltes van de geschiedenis," in *Romantiek en historische cultuur,* edited by Jo Tollebeek, Frank Ankersmit, and Wessel Krul (Groningen: Historische uitgeverij, 1996). Both essays have been very substantially revised and expanded for inclusion here. Earlier versions of Chapters 3 and 4 appeared as " 'The Untenanted Place of the Past': Thomas Carlyle and the Varieties of Historical Ignorance," in *History and Theory* 35 (1996), and as "Literature and the Longing for History," in *Critical Self-Fashioning: The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt,* edited by Jürgen Pieters (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999). I am grateful to all publishers concerned for permission to reuse these materials. Unless otherwise indicated translations are my own.

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Introduction

This book might well have been called "Reflections on the Curate's Egg" in memory of the unfortunate cleric immortalized by *Punch.* The idea that something may be "very good in parts" even if those parts cannot be discretely disengaged from the context in which they occur is laughable when applied to the test of fresh food; but, as I hope to demonstrate, it should be taken seriously as a way of describing our attempts to represent the past. Compromise, failure, provisionality, dissatisfaction: these are usually accepted as unfortunate but inevitable features of history writing.[1] I argue here that such shortcomings are not a mere by-product of history but one of its structural and distinctive features. It is chronic imperfection that distinguishes history from literature, at the same time as it brings history into a close and competitive relationship with literary texts. In what follows, I work out the implications of this idea through an analysis of a select number of episodes in the evolution of historical writing in England and France from 1780–1860.

My analysis shows that many of the issues with which theorists of history and cultural historians are grappling today are not temporary offshoots of what is loosely termed "postmodernism," but an ongoing and evolving part of the inheritance of romantic historicism, which opened up the domain of history to include potentially all aspects of experience. This left historical research and writing with the task of setting priorities and of chasing after the history-that-got-away in search of hitherto hidden aspects of the past.[2] The attempt to fill in what others had left out in a democratiz-

ing attempt to ensure the representation of all aspects of the experience of all members of society meant an increase in the number of potential histories, at the same time as it inevitably undermined confidence in our ability to grasp history-as-a-whole. The sense of the difficulties of the historian's task is aggravated in the case of cultural history because of the disparity between the relevance of topics and the availability of evidence with which to treat them, the difficulties of finding an appropriate discursive form to describe long-term processes, and the "dangerous" affinities with the novelistic genre, whose role has traditionally involved the portrayal of manners and daily experience in such a way as to engage the sympathies of readers. In short, the imperfection endemic to all historical writing occurs in an acute form in the project to write an alternative cultural history. This project has recently taken center stage, but it has been on the historical agenda since at least the late eighteenth century, albeit marginalized for many decades by the de facto primacy of political history within professional historiography. In studying the "legacy" of the historicist agenda here I am concerned less with matters of direct influence than with the theoretical implications of earlier attempts and failures to write an "alternative" history.

In putting the principle of imperfection at the center of an account of historical writing, I conceive of representation in terms of a project rather than as a product. It involves the attempt to portray the past in an accurate and a coherent way, whereby accuracy marks the realization of the desire for a correspondence between the image of the past presented and the past as it actually was, and coherence marks the realization of the desire to make sense of the past at a later point in time. Crucially, representation is defined here by the attempt itself and not by the extent to which that attempt is successful. It involves an invitation to see a text as an adequate account of some aspect of the past. As such, representation is the starting point for an exchange, rather than the endpoint of discussion. I will be elaborating on this point in the chapters that follow, but some clarifying remarks seem appropriate here.

To begin with, my argument assumes that historical writing is premised on the objectivity of events with respect to those who try to get to know them at a later point in time or who believe they already know them.[3] As a cultural practice, in other words, history in its various forms involves an engagement with past realities believed to have existed outside our latter-day representations of them. This is by no means to suggest that we can actually achieve "objectivity" in our cognitive dealings with the past, that is, that the past can in fact be both reconstructed in its entirety and made meaningful. On the contrary, historical representation is premised as much on the loss or absence of past reality as on its former existence. This point

has also been made by Gabrielle Spiegel, who has written recently of a growing realization "that the past inevitably escapes us, that words, names, signs, functions—our fragile instruments of research and scholarship—are at best only momentarily empowered to capture the reality of the past, the knowledge of which as a lived, experienced, understood repository of life is always slipping away, if indeed it was ever knowable to begin with." Accordingly, Spiegel argues, historical practice should be seen as "more about humility than mastery" and as characterized more by struggle than by success.[4]

In the present study, I follow a similar line of thought and argue that there is an inherent incongruity between correspondence and coherence, between reconstruction and meaning, and that this incongruity is at the very heart of historical practice and of its evolution. Past reality functions here less as a guarantee of certainties, then, than as the locus of resistance to our imaginings.[5] It is the source of a perennial challenge to go beyond our present-day view of the world or to come to terms with an inheritance we cannot shake off.

Secondly, historical representation is dependent in practice on the representability of events, and not on their reality as such. Our ability to talk about past experience is obviously linked to the information we have concerning it: if we don't know that something happened we cannot talk about it, and the representation forecloses. More than just a matter of historical sources, however, representability also involves the capacity to synthesize information in such a way as to produce a meaningful discourse about the past. The information available, on the one hand, and the conceptual and discursive models we have developed for talking about the past, on the other, meet each other halfway, as it were. And not all topics prove equally representable according to the available discursive models, hence the need for experimentation in search of new ones. The problem of representability has been broached from a number of quarters in recent decades, particularly in relation to the horrors of twentieth-century history, which seem to defy all categories we have for understanding them. My argument here sees (un)representability as an issue of which we have now become acutely aware, but which in various degrees and various ways affects all of historical representation. Writing history is an attempt to present as well as we can something that is ultimately "unpresentable"(to recall Lyotard's phrase).[6] As we shall see, the problem of representability has haunted the project to write a cultural history focused on the lived experiences of our ancestors, the topic that at once seems close to home and permanently elusive.

It follows from my definition of representation as project or "attempt" that a text may be recognized as a historical representation without its au-

tomatically being accepted as a fully satisfactory history. This means among other things that it is theoretically possible for historical works other than those written within the historiographical genre or by professional historians (novels, poems, memoirs) to have a certain status as representations. In accordance with this idea I pay attention in what follows both to these other genres and to historiography proper. Criticism in itself does not change the status of a work *as* a version of the past, though clearly it influences the degree to which it will be found convincing and authoritative as such. An account of the past may seem to combine enough evidence with such a coherent argument that it makes alternative accounts unthinkable and unnecessary for the nonce and acquires the status of historical knowledge. In the short or the long term, however, representations usually fail to convince in all respects, coming to appear in part inaccurate, incomplete, incoherent, or simply trivial in the light of some alternative view of the past or of the aims of historical practice. My emphasis on the gap between the history we imagine and the particular representations of the past we have at our disposal is an attempt to take into theoretical account the varieties of history and the dynamics of historical debate and experimentation. For the fact that historical practice involves muddling along in a less than perfect world has been neglected in theories of historical writing, which have tended by and large either to concentrate on isolated canonical works—the "House of Lords" of historical practice, as Lionel Gossman calls them[7]—or to put forward prescriptive views on how things should ideally be done in the future. In my argument, the possibility of a historical account's being successful—that is, convincing for the nonce as a sufficiently accurate and sufficiently coherent account of the past—is linked logically to the possibility of its failing, of its being judged more or less a misrepresentation. Seen from this point of view, historical representation in its various forms always opens up a potential gap between the image of events on offer and our prior beliefs regarding events and our expectations regarding history; between the particular image on offer and the perfect or "virtual" history combining evidence, coherence, and relevance that can be imagined in general outline but that may be much more difficult to concretize in practice.

This approach to historical writing and its evolution through the principle of imperfection allows me specifically to address an issue that in recent years has received a lot of attention: the role of fiction. Carlo Ginzburg noted in 1991 that the "peripheral, blurred area between fiction and history" has been brought "close to the center of contemporary historiographical debate."[8] This interest in the boundaries between fiction and history is a response, on the one hand, to the proliferation of mediatized images of the past in contemporary culture, where the public at large are arguably as dependent on filmmakers and novelists for their views of his-

tory as they are on professional historians. On the other hand, it is a response to the theoretical challenges thrown down by the "linguistic turn" in historical theory with its emphasis on the constructed nature of our images of the past. Hence Hayden White's call for a reconsideration of historical narratives "as what they most manifestly are—verbal fictions—the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences."[9] This comment has been echoed in many quarters in recent years, both by those interested like myself in following White and exploring the intersections between historical writing and imaginative literature and by those who see his call for such an investigation as the first step toward abandoning the very raison d'être of professional historical practice. Indeed, the prominence of "fiction" as an issue in current debates, and concerns about blurring the boundaries between writings based on research and those based on imagination, can be attributed in part to the fact that epistemological developments insisting on the constructed and situated nature of our knowledge of the past coincided historically with an interest among professionals in topics traditionally the preserve of novelists and traditionally considered "trivial" by their predecessors.

Unfortunately, recent discussions of the relationship between history and fiction have given off more smoke than light. Fraught with terminological confusion, the discussion has too often ended up sliding between the various aspects of "fictionality" and associated terms like "literature" and "aesthetics." Like all concepts that have been on the go for a long time, "fiction" has accumulated quite a range of highly charged meanings together with a cloud of connotations:

1. There is "fiction" in the original or primary sense of "that which is constructed," i.e., that which is made rather than found and to which the adjective *fictive* applies.
2. There is "fiction" in the sense of that which is invented rather than real and to which the adjectives *fictitious* and *imaginary* apply.
3. There is "fiction" in the sense of a particular attitude to information whereby invention or make-believe is seen as legitimate, and to which the adjective *fictional* applies.
4. There is "fiction" in the sense of novels and the *novelistic,* i.e., the literary genre that, since the eighteenth century, is one of the most important places for the public exercise of make-believe and for the portrayal of "manners."

When White referred to historical narratives as "verbal fictions," he was clearly out to provoke people into thinking more deeply about the perme-

ability of the border between historical writing and other forms of expression and about the role of imagination in producing history. But if the slipperiness of the concept of "fictionality"—its tendency to slide from the fictive, to the fictitious, to the fictional, to the novelistic, and from there to the associated terms "literary" and "aesthetic"—had a polemical function in getting reflection going, it has also tended to stymie that reflection by suggesting that the semantic links between the varieties of fiction imply a necessary link between the phenomena they designate.[10] Admissions that all historical writing is fictive in the sense that it is made and not found ready-made on the archival shelf (the starting point for White's interest in fictionality) are too easily taken to imply automatically that historians invent the events they talk about, and that they do so as part of a game of make-believe following the generic conventions of the novel and with the primarily aesthetic purpose of those texts we call literary.[11] Following the "inverted positivism" of this associative logic, admitting that one form of fiction is characteristic of historical writing, is taken to be an admission lock, stock, and barrel of all the others.[12] Not surprisingly, some people have preferred to keep the border closed and abandon the discussion.[13] The idea that historians impose form and meaning on their material in the act of understanding it and that they may be influenced in this activity by novelists can be all the more easily dismissed by its opponents if, through the mediation of the word *fiction*, admission of this fact seems to open the floodgates to the counterintuitive notion that historians, by choice or necessity, also construct the beings and events to which they refer. It should be noted that historians are not the only ones who engage in semantic sliding, being aided and abetted by many literary theorists who use concepts like "fiction," "narrative," "literature," "aesthetic function" as if they were necessarily interchangeable just because they occur together in the cases literary scholars usually deal with.[14] As a result, the "blurred area" between history and fiction has in effect remained blurred, a source less of insight than of anxiety about the identity of "history" and, alternatively, the identity of "literature"—as if the entities represented by these terms could ever be monolithic.

There is something to be said for accepting the idea that contested boundaries are inevitable in cultural practice, particularly when it comes to the area between history and literature. Thus, confused and fuzzy as they often are, discussions regarding the limits of fictionality are symptoms of the constant need to demarcate the limits—and limitations—of historical representation.[15] For those specifically interested in understanding discursive phenomena and the historic interrelations between them, however, the topography and infrastructure of this border region (including the border

disputes) cry out for further analysis as do differences *within* these neighboring domains.

In the analyses of early-nineteenth-century works that follow, I attempt to chart this frontier territory in more detail. I show that the various concepts covered by the term "literature"—"fictivity," "invention," "make-believe," "literarity," and "aesthetic function"—may be applicable to historical representations, not only to works of historical fiction but also to works of historiography. At the same time, I also show that these terms are not always relevant to the same degree and, most important, that they do not entail each other. In the light of these discriminations, I analyze the complex and fraught relations between historical writing and literature as a particular manifestation of the imperfection principle.

In particular, I argue for the existence of an aesthetic effect that is directly linked to the representational function of historical writing—more specifically, to the problem of representability. Linking aesthetics and representation may at first sight seem odd, since it is invention, and not representation, that is usually considered to be the great seducer—as if given half a chance, all writers and readers would be at it. However, there is reason to doubt whether the charms produced by invention are always stronger than what François Guizot once called the "sovereign charm" of reality.[16] The latter "charm" does not just involve a fetishistic hankering after "the real" or "the authentic," though there may be elements of that in a world where the ubiquity of the ersatz gives added value to whatever seems genuine.[17] The charms of "real events" would seem to be linked to the greater cognitive power they owe to their ontological status. (As Aristotle put it: "While it is easier to supply parallels by inventing fables it is more valuable . . . to supply them by quoting what has actually happened.")[18] The complexity and unpredictability of actuality (at least if it is presented in a vivid way) may also force our mental cartwheels out of their usual ruts and so provoke that defamiliarizing effect that the Russian Formalists saw as essential to aesthetic experience.[19] In his "Postscript" to *Waverley; Or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814), Walter Scott himself pointed out that real events may not only be much stranger, but also more exciting, than stories that have been merely imagined: "The most romantic parts of this narrative are precisely those which have a foundation in fact."[20] And in responding to Scott's work, Leopold von Ranke used a similar argument in expressing his preference for narratives based on evidence (*das Überlieferte*) above romantic fiction, claiming that the former were "more beautiful, and certainly more interesting" than the latter.[21] That the *reality* of the events narrated has aesthetic consequences is arguably implicit in the ongoing popularity of the historical novel (I shall come back to this point). In any case, it was borne

out recently by some of the criticism directed toward Simon Schama's *Dead Certainties*: for at least one reviewer, the problem with the book was not so much that Schama had transgressed historiographical conventions by inventing scenes and individuals (after all he did so openly), but that the work (consequently) lacked "some of the pizzaz that we normally associate with scholarship: the rearrangement of unlikely details to come to an unlikely conclusion."[22] My analyses here suggest that the aesthetics particular to historical writing is a function not merely of the unexpectedness of the information conveyed but of the very attempt to represent the past in its complexity. The realization that certain phenomena, although they are real, exceed our ability to represent them adequately is the source of that particular sort of aesthetic experience which, from Burke and Kant to Lyotard, has been known as the sublime. I show how a particular variant of the sublime is produced by the relative "unrepresentability" of the past, that is, by the perceived resistance offered by the past to our attempts to represent it with whatever information, concepts, and discursive models we have at our disposal. Realizing that historical representation has its own aesthetics, and thus that it may have an aesthetic value alongside other sorts of value, is of particular significance within the context of the renewed discussion on the function of historical writing that is taking place at the present time. It is only by discounting the defamiliarizing and sublime charms of discourses based on real events that one can assume, in the struggle between representation and invention for the production of pleasure, that the advantage always lies with the latter.

As I indicated earlier, my particular focus is on the project to write an alternative "cultural" history close to the lived experience of ordinary people, as this emerged in the closing decades of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. I use the term "romantic historicism" to designate broadly the historical culture of this period and the convergence of influences by which it was characterized: a radicalized awareness of the alterity of the past and the historicity of experience picked up on the Enlightenment interest in culture and eighteenth-century antiquarianism and fed into emergent nationalism with its "identity politics" and interest in folk-culture. The term "romantic historicism" is above all a convenient label to situate the writers I discuss against the background of these trends and should not be taken to imply that each of those writers is "romantic" or that he typifies "romanticism" as such.

Each of the following chapters reflects on a different aspect of imperfection and does so through the analysis of a different case. The first chapter addresses the issue of "hybridity" in historical writing and is focused on the historical fiction of Walter Scott, a pivotal figure whose work is rooted in antiquarianism and whose influence stretches out into novelistic and his-

toriographical experiments in the nineteenth century. I use the writing and the reception of Scott's work to reflect on the heterogeneity of cultural artifacts and on our ability as readers to deal with it: How is it possible for a narrative to be historical "in parts?"

In the first place, I address this question by analyzing the ways in which Scott used his freedom as a novelist to combine historical evidence with fictitious events. I argue that his deviations from evidence reflect his political parti pris and hence the limits of his engagement with the alterity of the past. They can also be seen as a response to the inherent difficulties involved in representing historical reality—and in particular aspects of everyday life—in the form of a narrative. Representability is bought with the help of invention and hence at the cost of weakening, though not canceling, the claim to have represented the past satisfactorily. From the contemporary reactions to *Old Mortality* (1816), it is clear that Scott's readers indeed accepted in principle the novelist's freedom to invent, at the same time as they considered his novels to be representations of the collective past. This role was not reflected, however, in their granting it the status of actual "history" (an image that is taken as true). It was apparent instead in their attempts to improve on the novel, by benevolently supplementing it with corroborating historical evidence or by critically challenging its interpretation of the past with alternative evidence. Recognition of the representational status of the novel thus seems to have been tantamount to an invitation to replace it with something else. At least for those readers with a vested interest in the topic, the novel did not function as an autonomous "finished" literary work. Rather, it functioned in the mode of a promise, as a history-pending-alternatives, as an invitation to come up with something better.

Chapter 2 reflects specifically on the issue of "representability" in the light of the work of a number of French historians, from the lesser-known Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Le Grand d'Aussy and Amans-Alexis Monteil to the better-known Augustin Thierry and Jules Michelet. My concern is with the attempts they made to write, like Scott, the history of the everyday culture of earlier periods, but within the framework of the historiographical genre and hence without the automatic license to invent. The analysis of their experiments and their failures shows that historiography too is characterized by hybridity, the product of a compromise between the complexity of events and the limitations of discourse. As I show, the emergence of new topics of inquiry went together, though not necessarily in harmonious tandem, with the adaptation of existing discursive forms and the elaboration of new ones. In this process, fiction (as "novel") played a heuristic role in the generation of discursive models that historians then adapted for their own purposes; while fiction in the sense of nondeceptive invention (make-

believe) also had a role to play in supplementing or ordering the evidence into a readable form. In this respect the novel can be seen as a sort of laboratory where writers, exploiting their freedom to invent, develop new techniques of representation and explore new areas of human experience, enterprises that historians may then emulate. Although the discursive models the historians used were not always ideal in the light of their own goals or the readers' expectations, they could be provisionally accepted warts and all—pending alternatives—as the best available at that particular time. For how was one (how is one) to write about experiences that by definition are poorly recorded? The idea that the most important topics are precisely those that are most hidden from purview and the most difficult to talk about is a part of the legacy of romantic historicism, which feeds into contemporary cultural history with its ongoing quest for the "other" side of known history and its ongoing elaboration of new forms of expression.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the work of Thomas Carlyle and the issue of "sublimity." More than any other writer, Carlyle seems to have been fascinated with "the silences of history." Elaborating further on my earlier discussions of representability, I show how Carlyle emphasized time and again the limits of our ability to bridge the gap between past and present: if in some cases we are snowed under in details, in others there is no information at all available. Carlyle's very emphasis on the limits of his power to represent the past beyond his own imagination, the limits of his power to grapple with complexity, is paradoxically also the source of that aesthetic effect known as the sublime. Carlyle's work shows further, however, that if the historical sublime is in principle the outcome of an attempt to deal with the complexity of the past, it may also be simulated for rhetorical and ideological effect. In this way, Carlyle's work exemplifies both the aesthetic attractions of imperfection and the risks involved in overemphasizing it. When the limitations of historical knowledge are overemphasized, when they are aestheticized in the sense that their contemplation becomes an end in itself, the temptation arises for the writers themselves to lay down the moral and intellectual law. If the simulated character of the historical sublime is discovered, however, its effect is undermined and the work becomes "mere" literature.

The final chapter reflects on the ways in which consciousness of the imperfection principle, as I have been outlining it here, has been integrated into historical practice in both the more distant and the more recent past. In other words: How far can one go in thinking about the difficulties in writing history before undermining the nature of the enterprise itself or forcing us to rethink its goals and functions? How sustainable is the sublime as a response to the current loss of confidence among historians in the possibility of comprehending the past as a whole or as a single "grand nar-

rative"? I address these questions by analyzing the way in which literary texts (understood here as display texts) have been used creatively as sources of cultural history, from literary antiquarians such as Walter Scott to recent historians like Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Natalie Zemon Davis. Since literary texts are by definition problematic as sources of information about past attitudes or practices (this is one of the commonplaces of criticism), their use indicates a willingness to accept the notion of imperfection as a working principle within historiographical practice. It also signals a willingness to explore alternative points of access to past realities and experiment with new discursive models and cognitive registers. I show that when literary texts are used as sources, they may play a particular role in activating the historical sublime by provoking readers to imagine the long-gone context in which they were written and, in this way rather than through the provision of positive information, stimulating them to empathize with the dead generations who wrote them. But the aestheticization of our ignorance, even if it is derived from the actual conditions of historical research and even if it serves to promote an imaginative identification with groups in the past, always runs the risk of failing to satisfy the demand for a meaningful account of actual events lying beyond our imagination. We are not endlessly tolerant of imperfection. Having emphasized all along the limits of representation, then, my study concludes by arguing that it is precisely the tension between different types of imperfection that ensures that the dialogue with the past and hence the evolution of modes of historical writing and new conceptions of the function of history continues in ever-changing form.

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1

Hybridity

The Case of Sir Walter Scott

THIS STONE WAS ERECTED
BY THE AUTHOR OF WAVERLEY
TO THE MEMORY
OF
HELEN WALKER
WHO DIED IN THE YEAR OF GOD 1791
THIS HUMBLE INDIVIDUAL
PRACTISED IN REAL LIFE
THE VIRTUES
WITH WHICH FICTION HAS INVESTED
THE IMAGINARY CHARACTER OF
JEANIE DEANS:
REFUSING THE SLIGHTEST DEPARTURE
FROM VERACITY,
EVEN TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A SISTER,
SHE NEVERTHELESS SHOWED HER
KINDNESS AND FORTITUDE,
IN RESCUING HER
FROM THE SEVERITY OF THE LAW,
AT THE EXPENSE OF PERSONAL EXERTIONS
WHICH THE TIME RENDERED AS DIFFICULT
AS THE MOTIVE WAS LAUDABLE.

RESPECT THE GRAVE OF POVERTY
WHEN COMBINED WITH LOVE OF TRUTH
AND DEAR AFFECTION.

So reads the monument that Walter Scott had erected in Irongray cemetery in 1831 to the memory of the prototype of the fictitious heroine of *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818). In thus drawing attention to the real woman whose actions had inspired the character of "Jeanie Deans," Scott belatedly gave Helen Walker herself a place in public memory alongside her fictional counterpart.

As anomalous as this sort of crossover between real graves and fictional stories may strike us initially, Scott's commemoration of Helen Walker alias Jeanie Deans seems to have provided the model for a spate of similar monuments. Thus one of the gravestones at Roxburgh, erected by a local farmer, celebrates the prototype of another of Scott's characters, Edie Ochiltree of *The Antiquary* (1816):

THE BODY OF THE
GENTLEMAN BEGGAR
ANDREW GEMMELS
ALIAS EDIE OCHILTREE
WAS INTERRED HERE
WHO DIED AT
ROXBURGH NEWTON
IN 1793
AGED 106 YEARS

ERECTED
BY W. THOMSON, FARMER
OVER-ROXBURGH
1849

Andrew Gemmels was a colorful beggar who frequented the area around Roxburgh in the closing years of the eighteenth century. The fact that he should have got a stone monument suggests that the fame of Scott's fiction passed onto his prototype. Thanks to the novelist and to his reader Farmer Thomson, who erected the monument some fifty years after the beggar's death, Gemmels was spared an unmarked grave and allowed go down in history—albeit once again at the cost of forever bearing the stamp of his fictional alias.[1]

Yet another sort of crossover between fiction and reality is apparent in the gravestone erected in 1860 by Scott's publishers to the memory of Robert Paterson. During his own lifetime, Paterson had already been known by the nickname "Old Mortality" by virtue of his devotion to the graves of the Covenanters, and it was under his own nickname that he had

figured in the frame narrative of Scott's eponymous *Old Mortality* (1816). But again, it is *as* a character from Scott—"the Old Mortality of Sir Walter Scott"—and not in propria persona, that he is commemorated on the monument that still stands to him in the graveyard at Caerlaverock:

ERECTED
TO THE MEMORY
OF
ROBERT PATERSON
THE
OLD MORTALITY
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT
WHO WAS BURIED HERE
FEBRUARY, 1801.

These tombstones can be seen as part of a nascent heritage industry around the novels of Scott, involving his publishers who were presumably interested in promoting sales of his work, but also individuals who were presumably motivated by the desire to have their *own* names inscribed on the tombstones alongside the characters Scott had made famous: the beggar Gemmels had been a regular visitor to the Thomson household in the 1790s, a fact that presumably gave the next Farmer Thomson a sense of being part of the Scott phenomenon, at least enough to declare publicly his personal connection with the prototype of his character "Ochiltree."

Whatever the personal motives involved, the funerary inscriptions are of interest here as concrete evidence of the fact that actual experience can be the source of fictitious stories and that fictions in turn can influence our memory of what was real. Yet the gravestones also make clear that if fiction can thus be "mixed up" with reality, there is still no reason to abandon the distinction between what is actual and what is imaginary. In all the interest shown in identifying the prototypes of Scott's characters and commemorating them in stone, there is little evidence of confusion between fictitious "character" and flesh-and-blood individual. Helen Walker and "Jeanie Deans," Andrew Gemmels and "Edie Ochiltree" are clearly linked, but they are patently not identical because they have a different name. The case of Robert Paterson is trickier in this respect since he figured in propria persona in the novel, but the addition of "the Old Mortality of Sir Walter Scott" suggests recognition for the mediating function of the novel in transforming his public status. In any case, there seems to be a recognition

among all monument builders, encouraged by Scott himself, that his novels were an instrument in recounting local history although the representation was not always a literal one.

The historical novel as practiced by Walter Scott thus calls into question any easy separation of fictional narrative and historical fact, of invention and representation, at the same time as it suggests a certain tension between them. Usually, the very idea that the fictional and the historical might occur together is taken as a threat to the identity of each one separately, as if they simply belonged to two incompatible domains. This has meant among other things that the historical novel, which is by definition a hybrid form, has been something of a theoretical embarrassment to both theorists of fiction and theorists of history. Precisely because of its embarrassing hybridity, however, I want to open the present study by a closer examination of this archetypical "curate's egg."

Theories of Fiction and the Historical Novel

In 1850, Alessandro Manzoni denounced the historical novel as a misbegotten, self-contradictory genre that was doomed to die out. Underlying his criticism was his belief that one of the prerequisites for discursive success was "unity," that is, coherence of purpose together with a correspondence between that purpose and the means chosen to achieve it.[2] The unity of history writing lay in the fact that it provided readers with knowledge about the actual world: "As much when it conjectures as when it narrates, history points to the real; there lies its unity" (75); it "sets out to tell real facts and so to produce in the reader a unified belief, the credence we lend to positive truth" (73). In contrast, the purpose of poetical compositions was to produce "that unique, exclusive, and ineffable belief that we lend to things known to be merely verisimilar" (69). As Manzoni saw it, then, the historical novel was chronically problematic because readers do not know in the end what attitude is required of them—belief or make-believe—and are left vacillating in a twilight zone, with only disquieting doubts about the boundaries of the real and the invented for their trouble. And Manzoni could see no solution to the problem: for if writers were somehow to distinguish those statements which are claimed as true from those which are invented, the readers' uncertainty as to when they should adopt what sort of belief would be resolved, but only at the unacceptable cost of destroying the unity of the work as a whole: "how can [the historical novel] ever develop a unity while it is wandering between opposing goals?" (75).[3] Whatever value for the reader fact and invention may have when considered separately, then, their power is wiped out as soon as they

are applied in combination. Or, to use Manzoni's analogy: if you mix lamp oil and water together in order to increase your supply of the former, you will end up with a useless substance and no light (77–78). Keep them apart is the moral of the story.

Manzoni's dissatisfaction with the genre in which his own performance had been so outstanding exemplifies a general malaise in face of combinations of fact and invention that continues to dog critical estimates of blatantly hybrid forms like historical novels and historical films. "I do not doubt that fiction of the highest quality and history of the highest quality can be written by the same person," wrote a recent reviewer, "but I question whether both can be incorporated into the same book."[4] Theorists of fiction, like theorists of history, have tended to shy away from the matter of hybridity: while the co-occurrence in texts of fact and invention has been noted, this recognition of "mixed sentences" has generally prefaced their dismissal as aberrant or incidental. Or it has prefaced an attempt to resolve all differences by lifting the discussion to a higher level of abstraction where they become irrelevant.[5] Theorists have thus treated fictionality (and truth) like pregnancy: something you either are or are not, and cannot be just a little bit. Accordingly the goal of analysis has usually been to categorize utterances either as truth telling or as fictional, not to explain how it might be possible for them to be at least two things at once.

As far as theorists of fiction are concerned, this desire to resolve heterogeneity into some clear-cut state follows logically from two related assumptions that have tended to steer debates: the idea that fictionality inevitably dominates its environment (a discussion focused on fictionality-as-invention) and the idea that it is a property of the speech-act as a whole (a discussion focused on fictionality as a particular attitude to information). Exemplifying the first type of argument is Käte Hamburger's assertion that as soon as Napoleon is transferred into a "system of fiction," he is also "transformed" into a "non-historical, fictive figure."[6] This ontological transformation of a historical figure, known to have existed and to have died in 1821, seems counterintuitive. But within the framework of Hamburger's argument it is justified by the idea of a "system of fiction," the framework of the novel as a whole, which subsumes all historical raw material. The idea of a "system of fiction" is echoed in the more recent use of the central metaphor of "fictional world," which has enabled a number of theorists to account for the fact that, although story elements may have ontologically speckled pedigrees, these become parts of a unified, autonomous, fictitious system that stands *en bloc* at a distance from the world as we know it.[7] According to this view, "Napoleon" is a cultural unit who is mentally transported to a new world that is more or less distant from the actual one. Although particular story elements ("Napoleon" or "Dublin") may originally

have referred to things in the real world, then, their occurrence within the context of a story means that this reference is suspended: they become part of a fictional world that, as a whole, has no counterpart in the actual one.[8] The concept of "fictional world" thus reintroduces an apartheid between fiction and nonfiction, since the coexistence of factual and fictitious elements becomes irrelevant in the context of the all-encompassing fiction. Manzoni's belief in unity is not far away.

In recent years, there has been a tendency to approach fictionality from a pragmatic point of view, as a particular attitude to information, rather than simply from the point of view of the ontology of inventions. Seen from a pragmatic perspective, fictional utterances are conventionally distinguished by the fact that those who produce them enjoy the freedom to invent and do not claim to speak the literal truth; in contrast, nonfictional utterances solicit belief in the truth of the world presented and thus potentially also elicit criticism on the grounds of inaccuracy. The pragmatic approach to fictionality thus sidesteps the question whether a particular statement is truthful or not and considers instead the type of attitude it evokes. While there is a general consensus that a fictional attitude involves an acceptance in principle of the writer's freedom to invent, there is less agreement on the precise nature of this attitude. The differences of emphasis suggest that "fictionality" may cover a range of attitudes within a bandwidth stretching from the minimal form of "a suspension of criticism" (that which Coleridge called the "suspension of disbelief" and which seems linked to the traditional notion of verisimilitude) to the active form of self-conscious make-believe, taken by many contemporary theorists to be fictionality "proper."[9] I shall come back to these variations later. Suffice it here to point out that the idea that fictionality always dominates its environment has generally persisted in recent pragmatic approaches in the assumption that readers identify an utterance from the outset as belonging to one category or another on the basis of generic signals and that, having once recognized the operation of the fictionality convention, they become as it were "immersed" in the fiction and reemerge only when the game of make-believe is over.[10] As Ruth Ronen puts it, "Under certain pragmatic circumstances or in a specific cultural context, a decision is made to categorize texts under the rubric 'fiction,'" and once the label 'fiction' has been applied, "the reader understands the world textually constructed as a world uncommitted to reality."[11] Whenever fictionality is activated, then, it is deemed not only to govern the discursive environment but also to involve the suspension for the purposes of aesthetic play of any claim to be talking about the actual world.

Whatever the merits of recent pragmatic accounts in describing the nature of fictional make-believe in its pure form, it is difficult to see how they

can cover the case of the historical novel. From Walter Scott and Victor Hugo to Umberto Eco and José Saramago, by way of Tolstoy and Virginia Woolf, what defines the historical novel as a genre is precisely the interplay between invented story elements and historical ones. As novels, they are written under the aegis of the fictionality convention whereby the individual writer enjoys the freedom to invent and the reader enjoys the freedom to make-believe in the existence of a world "uncommitted to reality." As *historical* novels, however, they also link up with the ongoing collective attempts to represent the past and invite comparison with what is already known about the historical world from other sources. This "linking up" typically involves combining, in varying proportions, imagined story elements with historical particulars inherited from specific sources or from general knowledge about the past. It may also take a less specific form in which the novelists do not so much use historical particulars to compose their narratives as overtly supplement or subvert existing histories by focusing on aspects of the past that are off center with respect to the most well-known events in history (Balzac referred in this regard to the novel as offering a view of history *en déshabillé*).[12] But whatever the particular nature of their engagement with historiography, the point about historical novels is that they are *not* autonomous works of art (if such a thing exists at all). They are not "free-standing fictions."[13] Although written under the aegis of the fictionality convention, they also call upon prior historical knowledge, echoing and/or disputing other discourses about the past.[14] How can the operation of such duality be explained?

The fact that Harry Shaw's *The Forms of Historical Fiction* emphasizes, as he puts it, "the problem with historical novels" exemplifies the common perception of the historical novel as a perpetual misfit, something that is less to be explained than explained away.[15] But misfits do occur, even in the cultural realm. Manzoni believed that the historical novel should never have come into existence, since it is an inherently unviable genre. Yet, as he himself had to admit, it *had* come into existence with the work of Walter Scott and his epigones, including Manzoni himself. And it had even been successful, at least in the short term, as the popularity of historical novels in the period 1820–40 testifies.[16] Manzoni predicted fairly accurately that the Waverley star would wane, but he was wrong in predicting that the historical novel was destined to die out as a genre. To be sure, from the mid-nineteenth century on, it moved away for many decades from the innovatory center of literary production to the margins of the literary system. But it continued to lead a tenacious if middlebrow existence on the periphery. And it has recently reemerged, alongside the historical film and modernized "heritage" museums, as part of a more general demand for cultural forms based on actuality (itself perhaps a reaction to the increasing prolif-

eration of simulated forms of experience).[17] In the experimental form of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction," the historical novel is also one of the central genres of literary postmodernism, a cultural movement defined among other things by its interest in challenging and exploring the boundaries between the real and the invented.[18] Theoretically embarrassing it may be, but this misfit has refused to go away.

The fact that historical novels are produced and at times even occupy a central place in literary production reflects the failure of cultural practice to live up to the ideals supposed in Manzoni's theory, which, after all, aims to formulate a recipe for "eternal" works of historiographical and novelistic art rather than describe impure, warts-and-all practice in which standards are subject to change, generic boundaries are subject to renegotiation, and not everyone is so respectful of literary conventions as to let them override all other concerns. The tenacity of this hybrid genre and its current popularity suggest, *pace* Manzoni, that, even if combining make-believe with some sort of truth claim is less than ideal from both an artistic and a scholarly point of view, it retains an appeal for readers and fulfills some function, if only in the short term.

In what follows, I propose to grasp this theoretical nettle by focusing on this "misfit" of a genre in an attempt to understand how fictionality can occur and be functional in an "impure" form. For while the "real" and the "invented," the factual and the fictional, are relatively easy to distinguish in theory, in practice the lines between them are much more ambiguous. In face of the historical novel and, more generally, the postmodernist blurring of the boundaries between the real and the invented, theories of fiction have the task of accounting, not only for fiction as such—fictionality in its theoretically "pure" ludic form as distinct from "factuality" in its theoretically pure form—but also for the "impure" manifestations encountered in actual practice.[19] The same goes mutatis mutandis for theorists of history.

As my necrological opening suggests, my focus is on the work of Sir Walter Scott, the acknowledged initiator of the genre as such and a pivotal figure in the emergence of historicism.[20] My analysis starts from the supposition that Scott directly and indirectly claimed the freedom to invent while also claiming a certain status as historian.[21] Whether Scott's various aims were to prove mutually compatible and whether he could sustain this balancing act in practice is a question I shall leave aside for the moment, stopping only to warn against assuming that Scott himself was always theoretically consistent or fully aware of the implications of his own practice. My focus will be on his *Old Mortality* (1816), generally acknowledged as one of his most complex works (according to one literary scholar it is "a crucial document for the defense" in Scott's claims to critical attention),[22] and also the source of considerable discussion when it first appeared.

To begin with, I shall examine in some detail the way in which Scott combined historical and invented elements in the composition of the novel. In what way did he use his freedom to invent, and, conversely, how did he apply his considerable historical knowledge in making up his stories? I then go on to analyze the interaction between belief and make-believe in the reactions of his readers: How did his contemporaries deal with this combination of fact and invention, and what does this say about people's (in)tolerance toward hybridity?

The Speckled Pedigree of Claverhouse's Nephew

Old Mortality belonged together with *The Black Dwarf* to the first series of *Tales of My Landlord*.[23] Against the background of a complex frame narrative, the historical subject treated in this work is the struggle of the radical Scottish Presbyterians, the Covenanters, against the repressive government forces of Charles II in the second half of the seventeenth century. These divisive events still belonged to the outer reaches of living memory at the time of the novel's publication and they had been commemorated publicly in 1815. The events of the novel were allegedly narrated to the landlord of the title through "Old Mortality," the self-appointed custodian of the Covenanters' graves and conservator of their legacy.[24] Although the nonconformist Covenanting movement was known to have been active in opposition from the 1650s up to and beyond James II's act of toleration in 1687, Scott represents this historical subject by narrating only a minor segment of the period in question. The main focus of the narration is on three historical events in the early summer of 1679: the murder of Archbishop Sharpe on 3 May 1679; the Covenanters' defeat of the government forces at Drumclog on 1 June (it was the memory of this event in particular which had been celebrated in 1815); and finally, the battle of Bothwell Bridge on 22 June, where the Covenanters were defeated. After a remarkable ellipsis of ten years, the narrative continues briefly again in 1689, that is after the victory of the moderate forces in what is referred to, in three words calling upon the reader's prior knowledge of other sources, as "the British Revolution."[25]

The death of the "nephew" of Claverhouse, the infamous leader of the government forces sent to restore order to a Scotland racked by religious dissent, exemplifies Scott's way of proceeding. In the prelude to the engagement at Drumclog, we are told, Claverhouse ordered a certain Cornet Grahame to go and negotiate with the rebels gathered on the hillside opposite: " 'Here's my brother's son Dick Grahame.... He shall take a flag of truce and a trumpet, and ride down to the edge of the morass to summon

them to lay down their arms and disperse" (216). Accordingly, this Cornet Grahame, Claverhouse's "nephew" and "apparent heir," went waving a white flag of truce to offer a general amnesty to all the rebels present, except for those who had been involved in the recent murder of Archbishop Sharpe. After some verbal exchanges, however, he was shot down ruthlessly by Burley, the rebel leader and one of the erstwhile assassins, and his murder provoked the government forces to rush into battle, where they were beaten off the field in what turned out to be the Covenanters' only military victory. Or so Scott's story goes.

According to those sources we may suppose to have been available to Scott (no less than eight pages of the catalogue of his library list titles concerning the Covenanters),[26] there was indeed a military engagement at Drumclog, and a Cornet Grahame was indeed killed on that occasion and his body mutilated. (A note Scott subsequently added to the Magnum Opus edition in 1830 shows that the precise manner of his death was the subject of widely differing accounts.) Cornet Grahame may also have been one of Claverhouse's relatives, since this is indicated by at least one source. But there is no evidence to suggest that the relationship was as close as that of heir and nephew (Claverhouse's only brother is not known to have married) and hence that the government's actions were motivated by a desire for revenge.[27] Nor is there any evidence for Grahame's peacemaking mission, for his verbal exchange with Burley, or for his violent death at the hands of the latter in full view of Claverhouse who, according to Scott, "saw his nephew fall" (219). While some story elements are based on ostensibly reliable sources, then, others are based on less reliable evidence; some even contradict established fact.

If we try to unravel the strategies used by Scott to "mix and match" historical information in constructing his story, three strategies in particular call for attention. First and most obviously, there is *selection:* Scott made no mention of Robert Hamilton in his account of Drumclog, although he had extensive information concerning his role as one of the leaders of the Covenanters on that occasion (Scott later quoted extensively from this evidence in his Magnum Opus notes). Second, there is the *transformation* of evidence: Scott not only left out any mention of Hamilton from Drumclog but also ascribed the latter's role to John Balfour of Burley, chief assassin of Archbishop Sharpe, who was at Drumclog (and later at Bothwell Bridge). I use the word *transformation* to describe this procedure since it involves, not the invention of new story elements, but rather a reworking of historical particulars. This reworking often takes the form of a reshuffling of properties between individuals, as when Hamilton's historical role as leader is transferred to Burley.[28] But it may also involve intensifying or inflating phenomena, as when the relatively brief incident at Drumclog (arguably a skir-

mish) is turned into a full-scale battle or when the relationship between Cornet Grahame and Claverhouse is intensified from a commander/soldier or an individual/kinsman relationship to an imaginary nephew/uncle one. Third, there is *supplementation* of the historical record through the invention of individuals and incidents who are "native" to the story. Fictitious properties are ascribed to actual individuals (for example, not only was the unfortunate Cornet Grahame made into a nephew of Claverhouse, he had already been made to participate in an imaginary incident in an imaginary inn in the company of, among others, the historical Burley). Conversely, fictitious individuals are given some of the properties of historical individuals—thus the imaginary Henry Morton, whose public career and love life provide the narrative's principal organizing structure, is one of the participants at the Battle of Drumclog and an unwilling witness to the death of Cornet Grahame alias Claverhouse's nephew. Complicating matters even further, fictitious individuals may be invented on the basis of models of behavior that, according to the historical record, were statistically probable in the given circumstances.[29] In short, Scott disassembles historical reality into story elements, adds some imaginary ones, and reassembles the lot in new combinations.

The portrayal of the fighting at Drumclog thus brings into focus the complexity of the relationship between historical facts and invented elements. What makes this complexity so theoretically challenging—and so worrying for some readers—is the fact that the ontological pedigree of the story elements is smoothed over in the narrative. The "factual" and the "fictitious" are not located in discrete formal units that can be identified as such.[30] Nor can they even be identified with particular individuals or particular events. Not surprisingly, then, the reviewer in the *British Critic* (January 1817), apparently convinced by its plausibility, referred to the incident involving Claverhouse's nephew as historically true (95). Where a particular deed may be actual, the circumstances may be invented; where the characters may be actual, the actions ascribed to them may be invented; where particular characters are invented, the properties ascribed to them may be statistically probable in the period they lived, and so on. Within the framework of the narrative, however, all occurrences and persons described are given equal ontological status. Every phenomenon presented is described as actually having occurred in the course of the unfolding action; whatever their pedigree (did they originate in the historical record or in Scott's pen?), story elements enjoy equal status. In this context, it is worth recalling Roland Barthes's claim that "assertiveness" is the trademark of historical discourse.[31] For the case of Scott suggests that uniform assertiveness is instead the mark of fiction, and that it is nonfictional utterances, claiming to stick to evidence, that are characterized by uncertainty. Whereas the nar-

rative provides an ontologically homogeneous account of the battle of Drumclog, Scott's subsequent footnote regarding the death of Cornet Grahame acknowledges the existence of competing versions of it. (Or, to take a more recent example, Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* is peppered with qualifying statements indicating uncertainty and the necessity to speculate on what actually happened.)[32]

The fact that ontological differences are camouflaged in the narrative presented to readers would seem to support the contention of the possible-world theorists mentioned above to the effect that the origin of fictional worlds is irrelevant to their functioning as such. Peter Lamarque has recently insisted along similar lines on the importance of distinguishing between the matter of derivation ("Where did the idea for such and such a fiction come from"?) and the matter of reference ("Who or what specifically does the author intend to refer to?"), arguing that "the genetic ancestry of a fiction stands to referential relations . . . rather as the etymology of a word stands to its present meaning."[33] Following this logic, a character like Sherlock Holmes may well be derived from Doyle's knowledge of actual individuals, but in describing his detective, Doyle refers only to a non-existent entity and invites the reader to make-believe in his existence. When it comes to a historical novel, however, this dismissal of origins as irrelevant to the current fiction seems counterintuitive. As the name "historical fiction" indicates, with its double invitation to make-believe and to activate prior knowledge of the past, the links between the story and the sources from which it is partly derived are not irrelevant. These are precisely what make it both attractive and chronically suspect.

The fact that *Old Mortality* called upon historical knowledge and is demonstrably derived in part from historical evidence makes it difficult to dismiss it out of hand as having nothing to do with our knowledge of actual events. Scott's quasi-fidelity to historical evidence explains in part the realism of the early novels in the eyes of his contemporaries: the incidents narrated may not have happened in the way described or to the particular individuals described, but in many cases they did happen to someone, so that the more or less fuzzy memory of what did happen may have contributed to the public's sense of what is plausible. Moreover, the knowledge that Scott's story is based in part on historical evidence gives readers past and present a theoretical justification for granting it a certain status as an account of the past. In the light of this, it is interesting to note how the historian V. G. Kiernan, who was presumably aware of the imaginary status of "Cuddie Headrigg's mother," nevertheless invoked this character in order to indicate the nature of a particular trend among Presbyterians of the late seventeenth century:

> At the bottom of the scale there was often a fierce devotion to Kirk and Covenants among servant-women, and wives of peasants, like Cuddie Headrigg's mother in *Old Mortality*, who could find in the exaltation of the cause and its perils a release from the harsh, narrow existence to which they were condemned.[34]

An imaginary character who exemplifies an actual social trend? A comment like this suggests that the opposition "fictional, uncommitted to reality" and "nonfictional, committed to truth" has to be triangulated more explicitly with the concept of "representation." To represent means to establish a meaningful relationship between something that is presented (in this case, the information presented in a text) and something that is permanently absent (events in the seventeenth century). The notion of a "meaningful relationship" should not be construed here in terms of a perfect fit between the information presented and the past reality represented (past realities are only partially known and can never be fully reconstructed). It involves rather the idea that the understanding of that which is presented is a possible way into understanding that which is absent. In other words, it is an invitation to establish a fit between the idea of the past and particular concrete exemplifications of it.

Once the concept of representation is introduced as a third element, it becomes apparent that a text may present imaginary characters and incidents as exemplifications of broader social phenomena.[35] As a number of commentators from Georg Lukács to Marcel Gauchet have pointed out, exemplifying social trends through the invention of representative figures or "types" is a central feature of Scott's art, which marks the introduction of democratic principles into literary discourse along with the problem, by now so familiar to historians, of deciding who and what represents those groups most fully and which groups are most representative of society as a whole.[36]

Up to a point the strategies used by Scott are similar to those adopted by all those who represent the past. In order to talk about historical events, historians have to synthesize masses of material with the help of colligatory concepts like "the Royalists" or "the Covenanters," decide whether an engagement constituted a "skirmish" or a "battle," and illustrate large-scale social phenomena with specific examples of behavior or attitude. What distinguishes Scott's way of proceeding, then, is not the fact that he processes evidence in order to construct a discourse about the past, but the fact that he uses his freedom as a novelist to invent tailor-made exempla by mixing, matching, and supplementing the properties of actual individuals (and as we have seen, a historian like Kiernan could recycle Scott's fiction within

the context of a nonfictional discourse). The addition of imaginary exemplars means not that the representational function of the fictional account is abolished but that the extent to which it claims to be satisfactory as a representation is weakened.

At this point, it is useful to turn to Nancy Partner's distinction between representations that are "true-to-actuality" (all the particulars recounted are true to what is known of the past) and those that are "true to meaning" (where the underlying interpretation of what happened is considered true).[37] What distinguishes the two forms of truth is above all the nature of the authority on which they are based. Representations that are "true-to-actuality" claim fidelity to historical sources, and their authority is thus based on their relation to evidence and to the historical particulars gleaned from it (presumably those who claim such authority will also take measures to enforce it by collecting evidence and referring in specific terms to it). In contrast, representations that are "true-to-meaning" claim to have insight into the underlying configuration of past events, and their authority is based to a lesser degree on evidence and much more on confidence in the understanding and learning of the interpreter. While the emphasis in modern historiographical thought has been laid on fidelity to evidence and exhaustive and methodic research as a precondition of interpretive validity, in earlier periods the emphasis was more on usable interpretations of the past that ring true. But though the emphasis has shifted along with the terms of the debate, the underlying logic of historical representation seems to be the same: the more an account is seen to be true both to actuality and to meaning, the stronger its claim to be considered a satisfactory representation and the longer its shelf life as an effective interpretation of the past. Whenever the lack of congruence between actuality and meaning becomes apparent (and, as I argue later in Chapter 2, the incongruence is chronic), people have to make do with the less than satisfactory representations they have, or go in quest of alternatives.

In arrogating to himself as a novelist the freedom to invent the particulars of his story, Scott reneged on the claim to be fully and literally true-to-actuality since he did not bind himself to respect particular facts. But he did not thereby renege on the claim to have represented Scottish history in such a way as to be true-to-its-meaning, and indeed, far from abandoning actuality entirely, he martialed considerable historical knowledge to underwrite this claim. Scott's way of proceeding is difficult to account for, therefore, with contemporary notions of fictionality centered on the principle of ludic make-believe or traditional notions of historical writing based on literal fidelity to particulars. An implicit invitation to "make-believe" is certainly applicable to the frame narratives, but it seems to have been less important to the novel as a whole than the implicit invitation to "willingly

suspend disbelief," that is, to be open to be persuaded as to the verisimilitude or plausibility of a particular representation. This raises the question how readers' awareness of the writer's freedom to invent and of the way in which the novelist exercised that freedom in practice influenced their judgment of Scott's representation of history. How far can an author afford to go in presuming a willingness to suspend disbelief?

Before turning to the specific reactions of readers, however, I want to consider briefly the function of Scott's use of fiction: Why invent at all?

Narrativity and the Facilities of Fiction

One obvious answer to the question why Scott compromised his representation by "fiction" is that he was in the first instance a novelist, and not a historian; and that his priorities were simply to write a successful literary work, cashing in on the novelty of his subject matter so as to create that defamiliarizing effect characteristic of art and, more generally, cashing in on the status of historical subjects as a way of elevating the romance form within the literary hierarchy. There is something to be said for this, though it cannot be the whole answer since it underestimates the degree to which generic borders ran differently at the beginning of the nineteenth century when historiography was still a branch of literature. (Against this background, Scott was arguably as much involved in exploring alternative forms of historical writing as he was in exploring new novelistic forms.) But even if we were to accept that Scott's primary aim was to write a novel, the question arises whether he could not have achieved the same defamiliarizing effects by sticking to the historical record.

If Scott's manipulation of the historical record by selecting, transforming, and supplementing evidence is examined from the point of view of the purpose it presumably serves, it becomes quickly obvious that it tends above all toward reducing the figurative diversity that characterized the historical record. By combining different characters into composite figures, by transferring properties among individuals, and especially by inventing the central figure of Henry Morton, Scott presented—embodied—the whole complex of events in the lives and behavior of a limited number of recurring individuals. Even then, as we shall see, the *Critical Review* complained of the sheer number of characters involved in the novel. (In this regard, it is worth pointing out that the tendency for historical novels to have a large cast of characters, albeit considerably fewer than the historical record, may be one formal marker of their representational function.)

By concentrating the action in the hands of a relatively limited number of both historical and fictitious characters, Scott could project onto the his-

tory of the period a figurative continuity against which the transformations and continuities in the collective fortunes of the Scots could be measured.[38] Indicative of this policy of reduction and concentration is the fact that the figure of Claverhouse, on the Royalist side, is allowed to eclipse all other government commanders, while Burley is given an equally preeminent role among the Covenanters. Indeed, there is room for speculation that Scott's choice of chronological segment was determined by the predisposition of the historical material to yield figurative continuity—with the help of some transformation and supplementation—in the form of the dramatic opposition between these two extremists. As we have seen in the case of Claverhouse's nephew, moreover, the fiction is used to reinforce ideological motives by personal ones, in such a way as to "overdetermine" the dramatic opposition between the different parties by showing it as the inevitable result of multiple causes.

One of the important side effects of this reduction and condensation at the figurative level is that attention could also be paid, without overburdening the narrative with too much detail, to the private lives and motives of a select number of individuals. This meant not only that readers could be invited to identify with the hopes and frustrations of individuals as the events unfold, but that the novelist could extend his representation of the period into the culture of everyday life, which formed the background to the political events. Typical of this sort of behind-the-scenes history (Balzac's history *en déshabillé*) is the account of Henry Morton's arrest, in the course of which Scott gives a lavish description of the frugal Scotch dinner of soup and salmon that the Morton household was eating, including details such as the distribution of food according to the diner's position above or below the salt and the custom of locking the outer doors during the meal (126–28).[39] One might be tempted to reduce such details to the decorative function of "local color." But this would be to ignore their role as fragments of a *longue durée* cultural history that Scott integrates into the narrative of political/private events, exemplifying the "normality" that has been disrupted by the civil conflict and that is implicitly restored at the end of the novel. It was through the depiction of such detail that Scott, according to an admirer like Prosper de Barante, managed to embody the past in such a lively way that the latter-day public could almost experience it anew.[40]

It would appear then that representing the troubles in late-seventeenth-century Scotland in the form of a fully fledged narrative full of human interest—that "biographical interest" which Carlyle saw as an essential but neglected part of historical knowledge—was more important to the novelist than accuracy with respect to particulars.[41] The particular story he tells leads from a peaceful state through social injustice, civil conflict, and private misunderstandings to a happy resolution in the marriage of the pro-

tagonist Henry Morton, a marriage that is presented, in an implied *post hoc ergo propter hoc,* as following on the Glorious Revolution. In narrativizing the Covenanting period in this particular way, Scott offers a focus for the reader's sympathy and an interpretation of events that reflects his own sympathy for social underdogs, his affinity with ideological moderation and the Williamite settlement, and his own acceptance of the principle that, however fascinating and troubled the past, these particular bygones should be bygones. In this way *Old Mortality* can be seen as a monument designed both to commemorate this episode in the past and, similar to a gravestone, lay it to rest.

More important here, however, than the specifics of Scott's interpretation is his use of the narrative form to communicate it. This reflects what Hayden White has called the "value of narrativity in the representation of reality," a value that is linked to the "desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary."[42] It was presumably the experience of seeing reality "narrativized" that induced Augustin Thierry to praise Scott for having brought out the inherent "poetry" of the history of Scotland, for having presented history "sous un aspect à la fois réel et poétique."[43] The very aptness of the concept of narrativity to Scott's novel, however, calls attention to the fact that White's theory hinges, unobtrusively yet crucially, on the concept of "desire": narrativity in representing reality constitutes a destination or ideal, rather than an easily achieved quality.

White implies that because fully fledged narrativity has been one of the central aims for modern historians, it is also something that has been achieved in practice. Scott's novels indeed confirm what White sees as our tendency to narrativize history and the ideological implications of such narrativization (certainly, the happy-ever-after ending suggests a closed, morally stable universe from which all conflict has been expunged). Central to narrativism as a theory of history is the idea that historical events themselves do not take the form of stories (as Louis O. Mink put it, "There can in fact be no untold stories at all, just as there can be no unknown knowledge").[44] Scott's novels exemplify the fact that narrativity, the representation of a story with human interest, is not the same thing as fictionality, the freedom to invent tailor-made situations and characters. But they also show how the former may be facilitated by the latter.[45] In other words, the novelist's recourse to fiction can also be seen *a contrario* as a reflection of the difficulties involved in investing actual events with human interest and a particular narrative coherence. The facility offered by fiction is an inverse measure of the difficulties involved in representing the past plausibly as a fully fledged story with human interest, *without* deviating from the evidence. I shall come back to this issue in Chapter 2.

In the meantime, the theoretical conclusion to be drawn here is not that White is wrong about the value of narrativity in the representation of reality, but that even more attention needs to be paid to the inbuilt tension between narrativity and representation as a structural feature of historical writing. If we follow White and other narrativists in recognizing the lack of congruity between, on the one hand, the network of events making up historical reality and, on the other hand, the coherence of discourse, we may also have to recognize that narrativity may occur in a less than fully fledged form;[46] indeed, that it can only ever be *approximated* in the representation of real events. It is in this sense that I understand Frank Ankersmit's view of narrative as "a proposal to see" events from a certain point of view.[47] If narrative is considered in these terms, then an awareness of the gap between the particular narrative and the totality of events represented by that narrative is always either present or imminent.

Indeed, Scott himself draws attention to the gap between his narrative and the period in history it represents in the very self-consciousness, perhaps embarrassment, with which he brings the novel to its matrimonial close. Ironically underscoring the contrast between the closure of imaginary events and the openness of history, the final pages switch back to the frame narrative describing an encounter between the narrator and a garrulous reader called "Martha Buskbody," who insists on having all loose ends in the narrative wound up as is the custom in a proper novel: "'Let us see a glimpse of sunshine in the last chapter; it is quite essential" (478–82). The way in which the novelistic character of the discourse is emphasized here serves as an ironic parting reminder of the *fictional* and partly *fictitious* nature of this representation of the past.[48] In underscoring the fictitious character of the highly contrived happy ending (a self-reflexivity that is also a feature of his frame narratives and a legacy of eighteenth-century irony), Scott himself seems to indicate the limits of his account as a faithful representation of a set of events.[49] At the very point where the account is most highly narrativized, then, the author hints that it has lost its grip on history, that it is a proposal to look at the past in this way rather than a definitive account of the past as it was. It does not renounce its representational claim, but it gestures toward its own shortcomings as a definitive account of events, its failure to offer a perfect account of the past, one that is indeed both poetic *and* true.

Scott was not the only one to be aware of the gap between his narrative and the events of the seventeenth century—not surprisingly since those events were also in fact accessible from other points of view. In a review of *Old Mortality* published in the *Eclectic Review* in 1817, for example, Josiah Conder ironically likened Scott to a landscape gardener. Echoing the eighteenth-century opposition between the "sublime" and the "beautiful,"

he argued that the novelist's function was above all to smooth away the rough contours of historical events in order to produce an aesthetically pleasing whole:

> Applied to history, indeed, the art of the novelist may be considered as strictly analogous to landscape gardening. In his hands the most rugged course of events is made to sweep along in the line of beauty; facts the most repulsive, are, by the most skilful management of light and shade, made to assume a picturesque aspect; graceful and romantic incidents planted in the foreground serve either for relief or concealment to the more obstinate features of the scene; and the dark array of truths which frown over the pages of history, are thrown into perspective, and mellowed down into a pleasing indistinct grandeur. (310)[50]

Scott's simplification, transformation, and supplementation of historical evidence can indeed be seen as a form of landscape gardening or as a "desublimation" of the past, to use Hayden White's term:[51] smoothing out the most "rugged course of events" into a coherent drama focused on Claverhouse, Burley, and Henry Morton, Scott represented the conflict-ridden history of Scotland in the last quarter of the seventeenth century as a story with a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end. In the eyes of Conder at least, for whom bygones were not yet bygones, this beautification of history was at the cost of representational value. Which leads me back to the more general question of how Scott's readers dealt with his mixed messages.

Mixed Reactions

As is well known, Scott was not just the author-behind-the-screens of poems, novels, and histories, but also a public figure who enjoyed Europe-wide fame, played a role in Scottish public life (for example, in the organization of the visit of George IV to Edinburgh), and, most important for the discussion here, became the focus of much critical comment and the stimulus for much other writing.[52] In order to understand the Waverley novels as a cultural phenomenon, therefore, it is not enough to study the composition of the texts. As reader-reception theory in its various forms has demonstrated over the past twenty-five years, a text directs its readers, but since they come to the reading with their own set of expectations and interests, it does not have the power to bind them to a particular interpretation or reaction.[53]

My analysis of the public response to Scott's work is focused on the reviews of *Old Mortality* published in English in the period immediately fol-

lowing its publication. By way of contrast, account is also taken of reactions to the novel in France, where the work was clearly assessed against the background of the much more recent civil conflict in that country. (Full references to all reviews can be found in the Appendix.) Wherever possible, these formal judgments have been supplemented by other forms of commentary and private responses in letters to the author. Given the nature of this material, both its provenance and its limited range, it is clearly impossible to describe how the "average Scott reader" experienced his novels in the process of reading them. The most that can be hoped for is some insight into the way in which people wrote about the novels in public, whereby they expressed and rationalized their reading experience in view of their own public role as critics or citizens. But there are many sorts of reading, and one should not underestimate the importance of public reactions as a distinct form of reception. Indeed, it will become apparent that the public role of critic and commentator is not merely a watered-down version of a private reading experience but something that is itself a logical extension of the historical novel as a cultural form.

As I indicated earlier, both theories of fictionality and theories of historical writing have tended to be based on the principle of homogeneity, whereby both the composition of a narrative and the attitudes to it are classified en bloc as belonging to one category or another. What is immediately striking about the contemporary comments on Scott's works is that they discriminate between different functions of the text and aspects of the narrative, and are apparently willing, *pace* Manzoni, to allow the novels to be many things at once.[54] This discriminating and multifaceted response is most evident in the formal reviews that make up the bulk of the evidence available for the reactions to Scott's work, but it would also seem to be characteristic of the more informal responses to his work, which often fasten onto a single detail or description. Since reviewers are expected to provide nuanced criticism, discrimination is not in itself surprising, but the particular discriminations made do tell us something about expectations regarding the text.

The first thing to be noted is the readers' acceptance in principle of Scott's freedom to invent while representing the past—which is not to say that they also tolerated the way in which the principle was applied, or that the boundary between invention and representation was defined in anything more than a vague way (and, as we shall see later, the possibility of the novel being both things at once may have been contingent upon such vagueness). With the notable exception of Joseph Conder, who protested that a novelist had no business making historical claims since, when challenged, he could always retreat into the argument that it was only "founded" on fact and not "amenable to the severe laws of historical criticism," all

parties implicitly or explicitly acknowledged that the novelist had the right to invent story elements while writing a form of history.[55] The term "fictitious" history as distinct from "sober" or "authentic" history summed up this distinctive mixture.[56] Curiously, the playful frame narratives, which have recently been the focus of considerable critical attention as exemplifying Scott's creativity, were almost universally condemned by Scott's reviewers as unwieldy, long-winded, and contrived. However, Scott's readers rejected the combination of historical and imaginary elements in the body of the narrative neither on aesthetic grounds (as an impure form) nor on historiographical grounds (as necessarily involving a distortion of the past). Thus Francis Jeffrey praised Scott for offering "an admirable picture of manners and of characters; and exhibiting... with great truth and discrimination, the extent and the variety of the shades which the stormy aspects of the political horizon would be likely to throw on such subjects" (*Edinburgh Review*, 218), but also ended with a reminder that the novel is "professedly a work of fiction and cannot be accused of misleading anyone as to matters of fact" (258).

Not only was fiction generally tolerated by the reviewers, but in some cases it was also credited with an added value in the treatment of historical events: a means of sustaining the readers' interest in the historical subject (*British Review,* 185), of whetting their appetite to know more about the facts of the matter (*Scots Magazine,* 931), of enhancing the instructive thrust of history by creating a "unified impression" from incongruous materials (*North American Review,* 258)—the last point confirming what I said earlier about the value of narrativity. The *Archives philosophiques* also saw a role for fiction in allowing for the representation of aspects of the past that otherwise could not be treated because of a lack of information. Taking the issues of relevance and representativity into the equation (a point I will come back to in Chapter 2), the reviewer argued à la Lukács that the portrayal of the experiences of an imaginary soldier could be historically more valuable, because more representative of general experience, than the account of the actions of a real general: "The experiences (*les aventures*) of a soldier during a campaign may provide the raw material for a novel in which history is represented in a faithful fashion through imaginary scenes; but for this representation to be accurate (*fidèle*), the experiences of generals should be kept out of it" (*Archives philosophiques*, 26–27).[57]

The second point to be made here is that Scott's readers were less preoccupied by the matter of fictionality than by that of "seriousness"—an emphasis that stands out in contrast to the ontological orientation of much of present-day discussion, where a story's status with respect to reality is more often a point of discussion than its possible triviality. For Scott's readers, then, the question "What subject is being addressed?" seemed often more

pressing than the matter of accuracy. In mixing up historical and imaginary elements, Scott had in effect also mixed up two genres: historiography, traditionally seen as one of the most elevated, serious, and instructive of genres, and the upstart romance, a more recent genre with a much lower literary status (typically a female genre) and a reputation for sensational entertainment.[58] Reacting specifically to Scott's generic mixture, Conder condemned the novel's pretension to represent the past, this time not on the grounds that Scott had invented incidents and characters, but on the grounds that he had attempted to treat such a serious topic as the Covenanting struggle in a novel (whose domain was that of "the manners, and follies, and customs of society" [*Eclectic Review*, 313, 316]) rather than in the more "solemn, elevated" form of tragedy. A genre designed to entertain is not a fitting forum for serious topics (a similar argument was made more recently by opponents of Steven Spielberg's version of the Holocaust in the film *Schindler's List*). Many of Scott's supporters pursued a similar if opposed line of reasoning, claiming that Scott's work had managed to invest the novel genre with a new *sérieux* (without taking away from its pleasures) and so promoting it to the status of literature. Accordingly, even as the *Archives philosophiques* and the *Journal des débats* discussed *Old Mortality* as a source of pleasure, they acclaimed it as a novel-with-a-difference, with a weightiness that marked it off from all its frivolous predecessors and that justified critics in taking it seriously as literature.[59] Reflecting a similar appreciation for this novel-with-a-difference, the *Scots Magazine* described *Old Mortality* as offering a "great store of entertainment" while giving the readers "a better acquaintance with an interesting period in Scottish history" (931). The *British Lady's Magazine* assured its readers that the novel "excites all the interest of a work of fancy" at the same time as it conveys "the soundest historical, political, nay philosophical truth" (94). The *Monthly Magazine* described it as belonging to the "kind of fictions which really aid the study of history, and as such, may be perused with general benefit" (546). Finally, the *British Review,* bearing out White's view of the attractions of narrativity, found that the novel demonstrated such "a general resemblance to the truth of fact as fiction must observe when she comes within the sphere of authentic history, but at the same time with all the picturesque additions and embellishments requisite to produce the effect of novelty, and to communicate that intense and sustained interest which belongs to the productions of dominant genius and chartered invention" (197).

The third feature of the reception to be noted here is the reviewers' conception of the text as a composite structure rather than a homogenous one. Distinctions are repeatedly made between different aspects of the narrative, in particular, between the plot (guaranteeing the coherence of the action) and the portrayal of characters and personal experiences (guarantee-

ing its human interest). Whereas structuralist narratology emphasizes the plot as a defining feature of narrativity, Scott's readers were almost unanimous in dismissing his plots as uninteresting, whereby they construed "plot" above all in terms of the loves and woes of the fictitious protagonists and not in terms of the social evolution they represented.[60] This dismissive attitude reflects the general lack of esteem in which contemporaries held the loosely structured romance form on which Scott had modeled his story. It also reflects the gap between narrativity and historical events that I discussed earlier. Thus although Scott went to considerable lengths, as we have seen, to reduce the figurative diversity of the historical material with which he was dealing, the *Critical Review* still complained of the excessive number of characters (108), while the *Monthly Review* noted the weakness of the central character whose biography was the delicate thread tying the incidents together (387). Above all, the shortcomings of the plot were exemplified by the dénouement, which came in for a lot of derogatory comment as being novelistic and contrived (Scott's readers thus confirmed the writer's own self-consciousness on this score): "Morton and Edith Bellenger are, of course, afterwards happily united" (*Critical Review,* 110); "The remainder of the tale more closely resembles a novel than a true history" *(British Critic,* 93); "[Morton's return] might appear too novelistic even in a novel though it should not be forgotten that the events occurred in Scotland, where manners were still a trifle savage, and commenced in 1679" (*Annales politiques,* 4); "[Morton] lived to accomplish, according to the approved precedent of most novels, the purposes of domestic life for which the author created him" (*Monthly Review,* 391); "The story (or the novelist part of this production), to which the picture of the times and the account of the public struggle are attached, is a matter, we think of very subordinated importance" (*British Review,* 197). As this last comment indicates, some readers further discriminated between the love-interest-leading-to-the altar ("the novelist part") and the representation of a collective crisis ("the account of the public struggle").

To dismiss the plot as contrived, then, did not necessarily mean rejecting the text as a whole. Rather the plot seems to have been tolerated as a necessary, if rather shaky, scaffold holding up what was really interesting: Scott's portrayal of manners and his depiction of the intellectual spirit of the age. In nearly all reviews, descriptions of character and of their social and physical environment were disengaged from the story binding the separate incidents together, and subjected to separate scrutiny and appraisal. Thus the *British Lady's Magazine* praised the "uncommon creation of individuality" in the portrait of manners, adding that "the story" was "altogether secondary" (95). Francis Jeffrey praised the novel for its "admirable picture of manners and characters," for exhibiting "with great truth

and discrimination, the extent and the variety of the shades which the stormy aspect of the political horizon would be likely to throw on such subjects" (*Edinburgh Review*, 218). The *North American Review* described the work as an attempt to "illustrate at different stages a state of manners formed in the conflict of causes very peculiar" (261). The *Scot's Magazine* remarked on the "uncommon variety of character, all well supported" (931), an idea echoed by the *British Critic* (93), the *British Lady's Magazine* (95–97), the *Monthly Review* (391), the *Archives philosophiques*, which praised the novel's faithful painting of a certain set of manners and a particular state of society (26), and the *British Review*, which praised the characterization, the detail of habits, and the "bold outline of the state of the country and of the age" (204). In other cases, where the interest in the "delineation of manners" (*Monthly Review*, 391) was not made explicit, it was reflected in the topics chosen for discussion in the presentation of the novel: the *Critical Review*, for example, foregrounded Scott's tableau "of an old penurious Scotch laird's table and family party dinner about the year 1680" (110), while the brief notice in the *New Monthly Magazine* referred to the "strong picture of Presbyterian fanaticism" (533).[61]

The unanimity with which commentators foregrounded the delineation of manners can be attributed to the fact that "descriptive powers" had traditionally been seen as one source of literary value and the delineation of manners as the *forte* of the novel. But the sheer extent of the attention paid to Scott's delineation of manners and the praise meted out to him on this score were presumably also linked to the matter of novelty. The novelist had managed to develop new techniques for integrating the description of manners and attitudes into his ongoing account of the lives of a restricted number of characters and, in doing so, he had opened up new aspects of the past to representation.[62] Scott's thematic innovations must be seen in the context of a larger historiographical project to move beyond the sphere of politics and military operations into cultural and private spheres involving the population at large. I will go into this project in more detail in Chapter 2. Suffice it here to say that it is arguably the fact that Scott was offering not just a new type of novel to the public but also a new type of history involving alternative experiential and social domains that explains the enthusiasm of his readers for his portrayal of manners. For, as the Russian Formalists argued, thematic and stylistic innovations tend to become foregrounded in texts in such a way that they dominate over other elements in the eyes of readers.[63]

The idea that Scott had represented a hitherto neglected aspect of historical experience was one of the commonplaces of criticism. Thus the *British Lady's Magazine* praised the work for portraying so finely the "actuating principles and manners" of the different parties involved in the civil

conflict, adding the comment: "It is one of the great defects of general history, that these dark doings cannot be brought close to the eye . . . the blood and tears of thousands are passed over with a yawn" (101).[64] As these comments indicate, Scott's innovation was located both in the type of experience being treated (superstitions, actuating principles, manners) and in the identity of those having the experience, *in casu,* groups who had been left out of the histories hitherto written and with whom "we" as descendants or fellow human beings can identify. The *Archives philosophiques, politiques et littéraires* gave the relevance of the topic priority over other considerations, being particularly fulsome in their praise for Scott's inclusion of the hitherto marginalized peuple: he had shown that "the history of a given period is to be found less in those named by history [*ceux qu'elle cite*] than among the unnamed [*ceux qu'elle ne nomme pas*]" (27)[65] Francis Jeffrey made special note of Scott's inclusion of new experiential domains, again prizing the relevance of the topic over the literal truth of every statement. Since "authentic history" had been "woefully imperfect" in treating the experience of everyday life, Jeffrey welcomed the fact that a novel had luckily stepped into the breach:

> [The author] has made use of the historical events which came in his way, rather to develop the characters, and bring out the peculiarities of the individuals whose adventures he relates, than for any purpose of political information; and makes us present to the times in which he has placed them, less by his direct notices of the great transactions by which they were distinguished, than by his casual intimations of their effects on private persons, and by the very contrast which their temper and occupations often appear to furnish to the color of the national story. Nothing, indeed, in this respect is more delusive, or at least more *woefully imperfect,* than the suggestions of authentic history, as it is generally—or rather universally written. . . . Even in the worst and most disastrous times—in periods of civil war and revolution and public discord and oppression, a great part of the time of a great part of the people is spent in making love and money. . . . The quiet undercurrent of life, in short, keeps its deep and steady course in its eternal channels, unaffected, or but slightly disturbed, by the storms that agitate its surface; and while long tracts of time, in the history of every country, seem, to the distant student of its annals, to be darkened over with one thick and oppressive cloud of unbroken misery, the greater part of those who have lived through the whole acts of the tragedy, will be found to have enjoyed a fair average share of felicity. (*Edinburgh Review,* 216–17 [emphasis mine])[66]

In this expansive apologia for what nowadays we could call "non-evenemential history," Jeffrey goes so far in praising Scott's portrayal of the

"other side" of political and military events that he verges on dismissing the Covenanting struggle as an insignificant distraction from everyday felicities—an enthusiasm that reveals as much about Jeffrey's relative lack of concern for the particular events in question (the contrast with Conder is significant) as about his historiographical preferences. More generally, his reaction indicates that the valorization of "everyday life" as a focus of historical attention is as much the product of choices as any other preference. (I shall come back to this point when discussing the work of Carlyle in Chapter 3.)

The immediate reactions to *Old Mortality* suggest that (along with Scott's earlier novels) it had a catalyst function in confirming the relevance of this alternative or "nonofficial" history, which had been put on the agenda in the eighteenth century but as yet not brought to historiographical fruition. Judging by the comments in the *British Review* to the effect that Scott had given us an account of the manners of former times "embodied" in a "romantic story" (185), the narrativity of his text facilitated this catalyst function even if the romantic plot as such was not itself, as we have seen, greeted with undivided enthusiasm. The general conclusion to be drawn from this is that the relevance of the topic—its importance, its "untriviality"—can in certain circumstances outweigh other criteria in judging the representational value of an account.

To recognize a novel as an improvement on the "woeful imperfections" of "authentic history" was not to recognize it, however, as a definitive version of the past. Although some readers were apparently satisfied with this account of the past that made it seem both "poetic" and "real," others were not. And whereas works of fiction are both the first and last words on the events they describe, *Old Mortality* as a work of *historical* fiction was neither the first nor the last word on the Covenanters. The one duty we owe to history, as Oscar Wilde said, is to rewrite it.

Ramifications: Everyman His Own Historian

One of the criteria that have often been used to distinguish fictional writing from historical writing is the idea that novelists do not stand open to correction (they affirm nothing and therefore cannot be accused of lying, as Sidney said), whereas historians are subject to criticism from their peers. As Nancy Struever puts it:

> The discursive criterion that distinguishes narrative history from historical novel is that history evokes testing behavior in reception; historical discipline requires an author-reader contract that stipulates investigative equity.

> Historical novels are not histories, not because of a penchant for untruth, but because the author-reader contract denies the reader participation in the communal project.[67]

Struever is correct in asserting that the distinguishing feature of historical writing is "investigative equity" with respect to a "communal project." A work that claims not merely to present an imaginary set of events but to represent an objective, multifariously accessible past is a *chose publique* that is theoretically open to competition from other accounts: the possibility of representation (of something's being seen as standing for something else) entails the possibility of misrepresentation (the possibility of something's being seen as distorting something else or inadequately accounting for it); hence the necessity for criticism, supplementation, revision. To the extent that the story told has a representational function, then, it is by definition not the exclusive intellectual property of an autocratic writer but is open to elaboration, supplementation, and correction by its readers. The writer of history is less an "author" than, in Balzac's phrase, the "secretary of society."[68] And those who find a particular representation satisfactory do so on the understanding that it should also satisfy others (as David Lowenthal has pointed out, history is distinguished from personal memory by its collective character, by the fact that "historical awareness implies group activity").[69]

Since Struever links historical representation to one particular type of writing, "history," and since she too assumes that each type of writing must have only one function, she is led to conclude that investigative equity and testing behavior must be absent from novels, even those identified as "historical novels." Although investigative equity operates with respect to the "history" in historiographical discourse, it is apparently not applicable to the "history" in historical novels. For all its subtlety, Struever's argument reproduces the stubborn dichotomy between novels and history. I concede the point that historical novels, to the extent that they are fictional, have no ramifications in the actual world known by readers. Accordingly, they are not open to revision on the grounds of inaccuracy or incompleteness (no one will query the color of Henry Morton's hair or the color of Edith Bellenden's eyes, no more than they would query the accuracy of Jane Austen's portrait of Emma Woodhouse). To the extent that they are "historical," however, historical novels do have ramifications in the actual world and are therefore theoretically open to scrutiny, supplementation, and correction. In short, the fact that Scott's novels functioned as representations of the past, not only in theory but also in practice, is paradoxically evident in the tendency to supplement and displace them with more accounts of the same events.

To begin with, the many reviews of his work were peppered with parallel, "sober" accounts of the events treated in the novels. Thus the *British Review,* for example, asked to be "pardoned for relating a little sober history for the sake of introducing some extracts from a historical novel" (193), a *captatio benevolentiae* followed up by no less than four pages relating the history of Presbyterianism in Scotland, as additional background for the events narrated in the novel. And it was not only the reviewers whose pens were loosened in this way. Scott's novels visibly spawned other forms of writing about the past, from letters to entire monographs. Most notable among the latter are W. H. Lizars and Alexander Nasmyth's *Sixteen Engravings from Real Scenes Supposed to be Described in the Novels and Tales of the Author of Waverley* (1821), Chambers's *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley: Being Notices and Anecdotes of Real Characters, Scenes, and Incidents, Supposed to be Described in his Works* (1822), Skene's *A Series of Sketches of the Existing Localities Alluded to in the Waverley Novels* (1829), Forsyth's *The Waverley Anecdotes: Illustrative of the Incidents, Characters, and Scenery described in the Novels of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (1820), and Wright's *Landscape-Historical Illustrations of Scotland and the Waverley Novels* (c. 1836–38). (Crockett's *The Scott Country* [1902] and *The Scott Originals* [1912] can be seen as late exemplars of the same genre.)[70] That there was a demand for such works and that they were popular once published is reflected in the frequency with which they were republished (Forsyth's work went into at least four editions between 1820 and 1887; Chambers's into three editions between 1820 and 1884). These motley "illustrations" are parasitic texts in the sense that they not only literally cash in on the success of Scott's own works but also are miscellanies whose coherence and raison d'être lie in the stories narrated in the Waverley novels (Forsyth even presents his work as yet "another stone added to the cairn, the mountain cairn of [Scott's] literary honours").[71]

One of the most important forms of response involved identifying the prototypes or originals of the locations and characters figuring in the novels. Thus Chambers identifies the possible original of the burial ground in *Old Mortality* and then exercises his own literary talents in giving a picturesque description of that location along with adjacent properties.[72] Wright includes a drawing of the probable prototype of the castle of Tillietudlem, which figures in the same novel, with an accompanying description that reads like instructions to the literary tourist on how to get there: "Drophane Castle . . . on an elevated rock at the confluence of the rivers Nethan and Clyde, in Lanarkshire, twenty-two miles from Glasgow and three from Lanark."[73] Forsyth gives an extensive account of the life of "Old Mortality" (Robert Paterson), the tender of the Covenanters' graves and alleged source of the story, and concludes that Scott's description resembles

in all respects the original (he also gives lots of additional information regarding Burley, but the purpose of the exercise seems more for the writer to show off the extent of his information than to assess Scott's fidelity to historical truth). In this case, the commentary forms a supplementary, parallel account to the representation given in the novel, its function being apparently to re-place the character in "sober history," as if this were the natural extension of Scott's contribution.

The same could be said of the 1830 introduction Scott wrote for the new edition of the novel: this consists exclusively of a supplementary account of the life of "Old Mortality," as Scott had known him or heard of him (he had recently been supplied with extra information by his contact Joseph Train). While this introduction more or less parallels the information contained in the novel itself, it is interesting to note that it also includes extra anecdotes that have no direct bearing on the narrative as such. Apparently, the fact of having been pulled out of obscurity into the public light, albeit in the context of a novel, endowed "Old Mortality" with a historical status. He could then subsequently become the object of further discussion and "sober" representation. It is indicative of this new public status that at least one extra story went into circulation allegedly linking some of his descendants by marriage to a minor member of the Bonaparte family (Crockett discusses and refutes the accuracy of this story in his account of Paterson's life in *The Scott Originals*).[74] An even stronger indication of the role of the novel in publicizing a real but obscure individual is the gravestone that was erected to his memory and to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter.[75]

This interest in the historical individuals who figure in the novels, and in the real prototypes of invented characters, seems to have been widespread. "There is scarcely a dale in the pastoral districts of the southern counties but arrogates to itself the possession of the original Dandie Dinmont [in *Guy Mannering*]," wrote Scott in the *Quarterly Review,* in his earliest supplement to *Old Mortality* (117).[76] Indeed, interest in seeking out the similarities between Scott's fictions and the actual world was apparently so widespread that the novelist felt obliged to begin that review with a general warning to his readers not to go too far in identifying his dramatis personae with particular individuals (in order to make his point, he gives an interesting explanation of the workings of "typification" in representation, arguing that if the author is correct in identifying classes of beings, people will inevitably keep recognizing particular specimens as members of those classes):

> [A] character dashed off as the representative of a certain class of men will bear, if executed with fidelity to the general outlines, not only that resemblance which he ought to possess as "knight of the shire," but also a special

> affinity to some particular individual. It is scarcely possible it should be otherwise. When Emery appears on the stage as a Yorkshire peasant, with the habit, manner, and dialect peculiar to the character, and which he assumes with so much truth and fidelity, those unacquainted with the province or its inhabitants see merely the abstract idea, the beau ideal of a Yorkshireman. But to those who are intimate with both, the action and the manner of the comedian almost necessarily recal [*sic*] the idea of some individual native (altogether unknown probably to the performer) to whom his exterior and manners bear a casual resemblance. (118)[77]

There are several possible explanations for the rash of prototype spotting to which Scott responded in several of his notes and which indicates that for some readers at least the novels were nonliteral or indirect representations of historical particulars. The hunt for "originals" can be seen as a tribute to the realism of Scott's style, the detailed character of which apparently reminded readers so much of particular places and characters that they read the fiction as a covert reference to them. Linked to this, of course, is the nature of the subject matter: a period of fairly recent history located in a clearly identifiable landscape. The motivation behind the "recognitions" of the Scottish characters, locations, and situations would seem to have been a sense of excitement at actually "knowing" or being linked to the real counterparts of the figures presented in a narrative that was the object of great public interest (as my examples show, supplementary comments were often linked to the urge to expand on the role of an ancestor). The ability to recognize a particular character seems to have allowed those doing the recognizing to assert their membership in an imagined community represented by, and created through, Scott's novels. Parallels can be found in the reactions to serial novels dealing with contemporary realities; a modern equivalent might be the excitement generated in a family or community when one of its members gets to appear, however briefly, on national TV.[78] Since Scott had anchored his characters and settings in the public domain, as it were, his texts *ramified* into the history and culture of Scotland at large, stimulating others to speak on and engage with the same topics, or simply go off on a tangent (like the reviewer of *Waverley* who took the references to dogs at Tully-Veolan as an excuse to set off on a discourse about the importance of taxing lower-class dogs[79]).

Ramifications: Footnotes

The Magnum Opus edition of the complete Waverley novels, which began appearing in 1829, was designed in the first place to give a significant boost

to Scott's finances, which had been in a bad way ever since the failure of his associates Ballantyne in 1826. The idea was to restimulate sales of the novels and reach new readers by offering relatively inexpensive, freshly annotated texts and new prefaces.[80] The addition of this supplementary paratextual material can thus be explained in part by the commercial need to have something new to offer. Jane Millgate has pointed out that Scott's annotations were also a way of ostentatiously elevating his novels to the pinnacle of literary achievement, since annotations on such a scale were usually reserved for works of poetry (Scott's collections of poetry had also been lavishly annotated).[81] Everett Zimmerman has indicated a possible desire to emulate the paratextual jokes of eighteenth-century ironists like Swift, whose work Scott knew intimately.[82] But the commercial need for novelty, the desire for prestige, and the desire to emulate other writers do not fully explain the phenomenon, although they may have contributed to the form it took.

Following what was said earlier about the tension between narrativity and representation, I want to argue that the accretion of footnotes around Scott's text was the logical outcome of his claim to be representing historical events. If the first edition of the novels was a landscaped garden, which Scott had managed to retrieve from his historical material with the help of fiction, then the additional introductions and notes were the weeds and natural shapes that insisted on growing back: information about the past that Scott had (un)wittingly left out of the original narrative and that he was now adding to it, partly in response to his readers. As Herman Melville wrote: "The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges."[83] The paratext around Scott's novels in the Magnum Opus edition makes up such ragged edges (indeed the process had already begun in the first editions, which contained the odd footnote). It is interesting to note that Scott's revisions consisted above all of paratextual additions that left the body of the narrative intact.

Some of the information that had been compressed, elided, ignored, or transformed in the service of narrativization was thus reintroduced in the notes, prefaces, and introductions, in the fragmentary and scattered form of a collection. Through the footnotes and leaving his narrative intact, Scott rooted his story more explicitly in actuality, by explaining here and there how he had come by his information, by identifying his characters in terms of their historical equivalents or prototypes (this information paradoxically underlined both his reliance on evidence and his transformation of it), and by responding to earlier identifications that were more or less off the mark. Moreover, Scott also occasionally included information that he himself had

not been party to at the time of composition, but that his readers had pointed out to him in the intervening period. Even after the proofs for the revised *Rob Roy* had been corrected, for example, a letter arrived from Sir Robert Peel with additional information about one of Rob Roy's raids; Peel had recently discovered the information in the state papers and thought it "not unlikely" that the novelist would have use for this supplementary information for his new edition. And so Scott added this last-minute note to the second volume of the novel, to which a new introduction and notes had already been appended.[84] The fact that his narrative *ramified* into the culture at large is expressed in miniature, then, in the paratextual accretions around the later editions of the novels. His Magnum Opus edition did not put a stop to the commentary though, and later editors have continued to add their own notes, designed to confirm Scott's accuracy by an appeal to other sources, to point up his ignorance, or to point to the freedoms he took with his evidence.[85] The ongoing accretion of supplementary paratext shows that the novel continues to be read as a history of sorts. The editors of the recent "Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels" are correct in stating that the first edition of Scott's novels "represents the culmination of the initial creative process"; but since that creative process was linked to historical representation, it was also the beginning of the work's critical reception and its public afterlife as history.[86] Whereas fictions are written once and for all (as we shall see in Chapter 4, the fixity of texts is also one of the conditions of literarity), the representational function of Scott's text ensured that it continued for a while to be added to. Unlike fictions, histories are not definitive.

Fiona Robertson has linked Scott's paratextual additions to the ongoing ambiguities of Scott's authorial stance and thus gone against the received wisdom that sees footnotes as the sign par excellence that reinforces the factuality of an account. Instead, Robertson quite rightly points out that Scott's additions are rather erratic and unsystematic affairs, some of them heightening our awareness of the factual basis of the account, others heightening the gap between the representation and the original evidence. Robertson sees this as yet another instance of Scott's creativity in fashioning an elusive authorial persona so as to "disarm criticism" and, as such, a continuation of the sophisticated plays with authority in the frame narratives.[87] There is no doubt that Scott used the Magnum Opus edition to reassert his authority as writer, by integrating other discourses relating to his topic into his own novelistic text, by emphasizing the basis of his account in evidence (often oral evidence to which he had personal access), and, conversely, by reasserting his freedom as novelist to deviate from historical fact. Where Robertson implies that Scott's ambiguities are a symptom of his creative capacity to be always one step ahead of the critics trying to pin him down

(that artists are always cleverer than anyone else is a common assumption in the study of literary works), it seems to me also worthwhile to consider the unsystematic character of Scott's paratext as an ongoing and not necessarily successful attempt (however clever) to deal with the challenges to his authority arising from the work's reception as history and his readers' freedom to become historians themselves.[88]

As we have seen, Scott seemed willing at times to go along with his public, allowing them a "say" in the revised edition in keeping with the representational function of his work, and apparently in keeping with the idea that the truer it is to actuality the better it becomes. He also expressed a certain gratification at the fact that characters had apparently functioned so successfully as representatives of actual classes that people connected them with those "specimens" whom they knew personally and of whom he himself as author had never heard.[89] On other occasions, however, he appealed to his novelistic freedom to make up his own story, becoming irritated at some of his readers who had taken his representational claim in too literal-minded a fashion. In his Magnum Opus introduction to *A Legend of Montrose,* for example, he hit out at Chambers's identifications of prototypes as an attempt to turn his work "into a libel on the parish."[90] His readers did not make it all that easy for him to have his cake and eat it too.

Resistance: Dalzell's Boots and the Vindication of the Covenanters

Earlier I suggested that Scott invited his readers to "suspend their disbelief" as he offered them an account of the past that, while it was not bound to actuality, nevertheless claimed to represent the past on the basis of his own insight. Would his public be willing to take him at his word? While some of Scott's readers were satisfied enough not to ask further questions and others supplemented his account with "sober" history, others simply refused to let his representation of reality go unchallenged. The ensuing controversy was a sign of the social importance attached to knowing the truth of certain matters. Thus events "fought back" against Scott's representation in the form of interested individuals committed to getting the story right or committed at least, in the first instance, to getting rid of whatever they felt was wrong.[91] Although they were dealing with a novel, these readers not only presumed the investigative equity characteristic of historical representation but also became "resisting readers," to borrow Judith Fetterley's term.[92]

Criticism came in the incidental reactions of individual readers who considered that their persons or members of the family had been misrepre-

sented. Thus, Scott had to explain in the Magnum Opus edition that the imaginary character of John Oldbuck in *The Antiquary* was not modeled on a friend of his father; in his letters he had to defend himself against an irate laird of Ardtornish who felt the McGregor family had been misrepresented in *Rob Roy;*[93] he also had to place a rectification in the revised edition of *Peveril of the Peak* in response to the criticism of John Christian, the attorney general of the Isle of Man, who felt that one of his ancestors had been calumnied. If he conceded in private and in public Christian's right to defend his ancestor, Scott did so somewhat begrudgingly: he incorporated Christian's corrected account of his ancestors' doings into an appendix to *Peveril of the Peak,* but he also repeated his warning that, after all, this was a fiction and as such should not be read as if it were making truth claims.[94]

These critical reactions on matters of detail suggest that, while Scott's readers accepted in principle his freedom to invent, the limits to this freedom were left vaguely defined. And their willingness to make-believe and their tolerance of actual inventions seems to have extended only to the point where the novelist's use of that freedom clashed with prior knowledge. This confirms Marie-Laure Ryan's contention that readers of fiction operate according to the principle of "minimal departure," whereby the story world is deemed to resemble the actual world in all respects except those stipulated by the writer.[95] But whereas her theory holds that readers of fiction accept any deviations from known fact as part of the fictional game (they recenter themselves mentally in a world where such deviant assertions are true), readers of *historical* fiction seem to react differently. While Scott's readers seem to have accepted in principle the novelist's freedom to invent, in practice they were not always tolerant of significant deviations from what they themselves took to be historical fact: they suspended their "suspension of disbelief," as it were. Such critical reactions were linked, as I shall show, to the "interestedness" of individuals in the story being told and the importance they attached to getting the story right. Thus although readers were generally content not to ask too many questions about the precise boundary between invention and fact, they were apparently unwilling to play along when Scott's invention started to clash with their own deeply held beliefs about the past. (Presumably a similar clash between the demands of the literary game and deeply held values occurs in the case of works that become controversial on the grounds of obscenity or racism.) Even if the details of the events in the seventeenth century were passing from living memory into history, the dissenting cause as such, and hence the interpretation of those events, was still capable of heating tempers. When Scott's readers became aware of the gap between the representation and what they held to be true, either they shifted to a purely aesthetic mode ("It's just a bit of entertainment," without representational value) or, if they

had a vested interest in the topic, they criticized the book for its defects as history.

This is above all to be seen in the case of *Old Mortality,* which met with considerable resistance from Presbyterian quarters where the Covenanters had acquired something of the status of martyrs through accounts like Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1721–22). Indeed, Francis Jeffrey concluded his laudatory review of *Old Mortality* by citing as a symptom of the novel's importance the fact that it had given rise to serious controversy (*Edinburgh Review,* 257). In making this remark, which is followed up immediately by a double defense of Scott's impartiality and of his freedom to invent, Jeffrey was clearly thinking of one controversy in particular: that unleashed by the Reverend Thomas M'Crie Sr., the well-known biographer of John Knox, through his lengthy review that appeared in three monthly installments in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* (January–March 1817) and that together with Conder's commentary in the *Eclectic Review* rang a distinctly negative note in the general chorus of praise for *Old Mortality*. (My analysis of this controversy is indebted to Ina Ferris's excellent discussion in *The Achievement of Literary Authority.*)[96] M'Crie's review was subsequently republished as a 240-page book pregnantly entitled *Vindication of the Covenanters,* which ran to at least four editions, including one annotated and expanded with extra supporting evidence by his son, published in 1841. According to Lockhart, the repercussions of this review were so great that Scott, who had originally felt it beneath his notice and dismissed it as symptomatic of the puritanical attitude to "cakes and ale," in the end felt the need to respond to it. This he did in the article that he co-authored for the *Quarterly Review.*[97]

M'Crie's lengthy analysis of *Old Mortality* was designed to support his argument that Scott was "chargeable with offences" against the "laws" of historical fiction, and to counter the distortions he had thereby brought into circulation.[98] Where M'Crie's fellow nonconformist Conder took the view that a novelist should not treat historical subjects, M'Crie himself took the stance that, if a representational claim was made by the novelist, it should be taken seriously. This meant, among other things, that his own role as a reader was not just to take the writer at his word, "as if the truth of the facts which the author has brought forward, and the view he has taken of them, were already placed beyond all reasonable doubt or contradiction" (239). Indeed, holding Scott to account was all the more urgent, M'Crie believed, since novels were likely to reach a much larger "ignorant and unwary" audience than a work of sober history, and unlikely to receive the same type of criticism. In this respect he also used his own review to hit out at the *British Critic*'s review of the novel for having gullibly accepted the portrait of Claverhouse as a true one (139–41), and the *British Review*'s account for

being ignorant of Scottish affairs (168). As M'Crie noted, he would not normally have bestowed any notice on a novel, but was paternalistically concerned about its influence in shaping the public view of the past since "the ordinary sources of public information are deeply polluted" (183). For all its shortcomings, Scott's novel had apparently filled a lacuna. What had M'Crie to offer instead?

Like most other readers, M'Crie allowed the novelist in theory the freedom to invent characters and recognized his intention to represent history. He did not expect the novelist to be "true-to-actuality," but he did expect him to be true to the meaning of events. Thus he pushed the representational claim to its logical conclusion, by demanding that Scott's account of events be impartial and evenhanded, true to the underlying configuration of the past (as he, M'Crie, understood it), although not necessarily literally true:

> It is by no means a story purely fictitious, but is of a mixed kind, and embraces the principal facts in the real history of this country during a very important period. The author has not merely availed himself incidentally of these facts; but they form the ground-work, and furnish the principal materials of his story. He has not taken occasion to make transient allusions to the characters and manners of the age; but it is the main and avowed object of his work to illustrate these, and to give a genuine and correct picture of the principles and conduct of the two parties into which Scotland at that time was divided. The person who undertakes such a work, subjects himself to laws far more strict than those which bind the ordinary class of fictitious writers. It is not enough that he keep within the bounds of probability—he must conform to historic truth. If he introduces real characters, they must feel, and speak, and act, as they are described to have done in the faithful page of history, and the author is not at liberty to mould them as he pleases, to make them more interesting, and to give greater effect to his story. The same regard to the truth of history must be observed when fictitious personages are introduced, provided the reader is taught or induced to form a judgment... of the parties to which they are represented as belonging. (14–15)

M'Crie had little doubt that he himself had access to what he called the "truth of history" and that Scott, writing from a different point of view, had distorted events while claiming to represent them. Confirming what was said earlier about how representation entails the possibility of criticism, M'Crie accordingly accused Scott of a "most inexcusable and outrageous misrepresentation" on the basis of ignorant anti-Presbyterian bias (128) and criticized the *British Review* (who had praised Scott) for its "gross misrepresentations of historical fact" (142).

In a series of remarkably astute if highly selective and tendentious analyses, M'Crie demonstrated how Scott mitigated the injustice of the government forces by reducing its scale or by showing the motives underlying it. M'Crie pointed out, for example, that Scott goes out of his way to suggest a friendship between the murdered archbishop and Claverhouse, and that this fictitious alliance helps motivate the zealousness of the latter's campaign against the nonconformists (68; the representation of "Claverhouse's nephew" clearly fits into the same pattern). He also pointed to the fact that government violence is camouflaged in the representation: the reader first sees the soldiers in action during their *nonviolent* arrest of Morton (48), and Claverhouse in the scene in which he *pardons* Morton (67).

Over against this mitigation of government violence, M'Crie set the novelist's exaggeration of nonconformist fanaticism. He pointed to the fact that Scott provides no antecedents for the murder of Archbishop Sharpe, thereby giving it an arbitrary character, and that the injustice of the torture of the Reverend MacBriar by the government forces is mitigated by an invented scene that suggests that the same MacBriar was himself a murderer (49–50).[99] M'Crie pointed further to the fact that Scott could have attributed the Covenanters' wariness of the Popinjay festival to their fear of encounters with government officials and their respect for the Sabbath, but had instead emphasized their dour dislike of entertainments (21–22). Finally, he pointed out that the fanaticism of the Covenanters as a group is exaggerated greatly by the fact that their leaders are presented as predominantly of the ranting kind, whereas there is no evidence to support this. According to M'Crie's calculation, there were eighteen ministers in all in the Covenanting leadership, two of whom supported extreme measures. In the novel, however, the group as a whole is represented by only one moderate and three extremists (invented by Scott for the occasion). The problem with the novel, then, is not that it is not literally true, but that it distorts the relative importance of the different tendencies within the Covenanting movement:

> To speak the sentiments of the *two,* the author of the Tales has introduced *three* preachers, Macbriar, Kettledrummle, and Mucklewraith; and to express those of the *sixteen,* he has brought forward—*one,* the Reverend Peter Poundtext, the indulged pastor of Milnwood's parish! Such is the equal and impartial representation of the author. (224)[100]

In thus challenging the accuracy of Scott's account as a representation of actual states of affairs, M'Crie shifted from the level of the literal truth of narrative details to their accuracy as accounts of the relations between phenomena and to the matter of statistical probability. He selectively undid the

representational strategies I analyzed earlier. In the process, he selectively offered counterevidence designed to show that Scott's fictitious characters are not probable in the light of the known facts and in that sense not truly "typical."

Although M'Crie generally granted Scott poetic license to invent, challenging the representativity of his account rather than its accuracy, it is interesting to note how he did occasionally criticize the novelist on matters of detail. This apparently inconsistent concern with the truth-of-actuality may be explained by the fact that, as with the other readers discussed above, M'Crie's tolerance of invention stretched only as far as his ignorance of historical specifics: as soon as a detail contradicts prior knowledge, and the border between fact and fiction ceases to be vague, it seems more difficult for anyone to go along with the account being given. M'Crie's inconsistency can also be attributed to the fact that "the detail" is one of the crucial tools in arguments about the interpretation of historical events, since interpretations are presumed to be based on the accumulation of particulars. As a number of recent cases have shown, it is very difficult to challenge an interpretation as a whole, and arguments about interpretations will usually be fought out around the accuracy of the particular details: discredit the authority of the interpretation as a whole, as it were, by discrediting the details.[101] Thus M'Crie, in an attempt to pull out all the stops in his attack on the novelist, complained among other things that Scott had mistakenly portrayed General Dalzell as wearing boots (58). The very triviality of this sartorial quibble became an easy target for Scott's mockery in the self-defense he wrote for the *Quarterly Review:*

> [T]he author has cruelly falsified history, for he has represented Dalzell as present at the battle of Bothwell Bridge, whereas that "old and bloody man" ...was *not* at the said battle, but at Edinburgh.... He also exhibits the said Dalzell as wearing *boots,* which it appears from the authority of Creighton the old general never wore. We know little the author can say for himself to excuse these sophistications, and, therefore, may charitably suggest that he was writing a romance, and not a history. But he has done strict justice to the facts of history in representing Monmouth as anxious to prevent bloodshed, both before and after the engagement, and as overpowered by the fiercer spirits around him when willing to offer favourable terms to the insurgents. (126–27)

Scott thus admitted his deviation from the historical truth on the trivial matter of the boots, but only to reassert the claim of his narrative as a whole to be a faithful representation of events in Scotland in the period under discussion on the grounds that "his judgement enables him to separate those

traits which are characteristic from those which are generic (129)."[102] What is important to note here is the fact that Scott did not just appeal to his original text in his own defense of his claim, but also supplemented it with yet more evidence about Claverhouse and the Covenanters in the form of "sober history," selected in order to back up the novel's view of affairs and to counter M'Crie's criticism. Despite his insistence on the irrelevance to the novelist of fidelity on matters of detail, then, Scott seized the opportunity offered by the Magnum Opus edition of adding a footnote entitled "General Dalzell, usually called Tom Dalzell" in which John Howie's *Scots Worthies* is quoted in implicit defense of the novel's contention that Dalzell did wear boots on occasion (*Old Mortality*, 569).

As the book title suggests, M'Crie's purpose in reviewing the work as he did was to "vindicate" the Covenanters, and to the extent that he clearly identified with the nonconformist rebels of the seventeenth century and what he saw as their martyrdom, his reaction was apparently motivated by an "interest" in history, a sense of being vicariously involved in the story told. As he saw it, the image of the Covenanters in *Old Mortality* was a new form of marginalization and persecution, this time at the symbolic level. Ina Ferris makes the suggestive point that M'Crie's concern to rectify what he saw as the misrepresentation of the Covenanters may be linked to the sense of having been excluded from official history, a sense of exclusion he shared with Josiah Conder, whose criticisms have been discussed above: "[A]s dissenters they lacked access to official history ('what everyone knows') and so were correspondingly more anxious to preserve their history *as* history—and not just one possible story."[103] M'Crie and Conder were not alone in this desire to counteract the influence of Scott and to keep the issue alive. *Old Mortality* was followed not only by "sober" criticism à la M'Crie's *Vindication* but also by other novels, what Ferris calls "counter-fictions," implicitly criticizing his view of events. Thus James Hogg's *Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818) and John Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize* (1823) were read by contemporaries as accounts of the Covenanting movement that challenged that of Scott by evincing more sympathy with the dissenting cause. Galt admitted having been provoked by *Old Mortality*, which "treated the defenders of the Presbyterian Church with too much levity," linking his own response in *Ringan Gilhaize* to the need to defend the memory of one of his own ancestors who had suffered deportation rather than condemn the "affair of Bothwell Bridge" as a "rebellion."[104] These alternative accounts did not succeed in displacing *Old Mortality*, which continued to be read and reprinted, because of its highly publicized position as a novel "by the author of *Waverley*," also, I would argue, because of its aesthetic merits as a gripping tale about seventeenth-century Scotland. M'Crie did cast his shadow on the novel as far as Scottish readers were concerned (witness Jef-

frey's reference to the "serious controversy" surrounding it), and in the long term it had its impact on Scott's text in the footnotes, which incidentally react to the alternative version of the same events.[105]

My purpose here is not to arbitrate between Scott and his critics, however, but to point to the operation of what elsewhere I have called the "agonistic" dimension of historical representation.[106] Quarreling among history writers is proof not so much of the inevitable subjectivity of all interpretations of the past as of the *resistance* offered to particular interpretations by alternative accounts. The fact that interpretive conflicts are often fought out on matters of empirical detail—to the point where footwear becomes an issue—reflects the importance of such details both as a common point of reference and as a rhetorical toehold from which to undermine the authority of the thesis as a whole. To be sure, Scott was writing in a novelistic genre that gave him the freedom to invent, hence to narrativize the past, and to represent the history of the Covenanters in the light of his own understanding without being tied down to evidence. To the extent that he claimed and achieved some historical authority, this was partly as an alternative to existing accounts (including Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*). Whether he liked it or not, then, his narrative became part of what Struever calls the "communal project" of writing history, and as a result it was forced into competition, not only with existing representations, but with the other accounts it stimulated. It is worth noting here that *Old Mortality* was a focus of public discussion both for those who resisted Scott's interpretation of the past and for those who agreed with him or at least saw the novel as the means for promoting their own views. Such was the case with William Aiton whose *History of the Rencounter at Drumclog* (1821) offered, as the subtitle indicated, "an account of what is correct, and what is fictitious in the 'Tales of my Landlord.'" The patently anti-Whig Aiton, who sharply criticizes the commemoration of Drumclog in 1815 as an instance of rabble-rousing revolutionary Jacobinism, goes to great lengths to adduce evidence in support of Scott's interpretation and, hence, in opposition to M'Crie's. The publication of the novel offered him the occasion to voice his own opinion, which was much less moderate than Scott's, both on the events at Drumclog at the end of the seventeenth century and (even more crucially for him) on the commemoration of those events—the mere "skirmish" as he calls it—in 1815. Clearly, Aiton wanted dissent to be a thing of the past rather than have it kept alive through historical memory.[107]

Whatever the precise combination of factors influencing the responses described here, it is clear from these responses that a theorist of fiction cannot proceed on the assumption of a homogeneous, politely passive reading public always more interested in art than in reality. Clearly, the novel

functioned as a (mis)representation of civil conflict in the past. At the same time, it is arguably Scott's use of fiction that ensured that his work became the focus of discussions of that period in Scottish history, since it allowed him to narrativize the past in a pleasurable way while offering lots of detail. It is also arguably his use of fiction, then, coupled to a popularity supported by commercial interests, that meant that his account, however imperfect, proved difficult to displace by alternatives.[108]

Actual Novels, Imminent History

The particular attraction of historical fiction in the realist tradition of Scott would seem to lie in the possibility for identification with particular characters and a coherent account of events; but also in the *promise* of another historical narrative, this time a "sober" one, based only on evidence. The readers are theoretically aware, as civilized readers of novels, that the representation is not all literally true, though they are vague as to the boundaries between the fictitious and the factual. And it is this very vagueness that facilitates an equivocal attitude that is more aptly described by the idea of a "suspension of disbelief" than by make-believe. The idea that the value of a historical novel is linked to its imminent replacement by something else was recurrent in the reception of Scott's works. M'Crie, for example, concluded his artillery charge on the novel with the optimistic suggestion that *Old Mortality* may "ultimately benefit the cause which it threatened to injure—by exciting more attention to the subject, and by inducing persons to inquire more accurately into the facts of one of the most interesting portions of our national history" (240). In the preface to *Peveril of the Peak* (1822), Scott supported the idea that invention is justified by the fact that since it creates "an interest in fictitious adventures ascribed to a historical period and characters, the reader begins next to be anxious *to learn what the facts really were,* and how far the novelist has justly represented them."[109] In an enthusiastic survey of the Magnum Opus edition of the novels published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1832, Thomas Lister praised the novelist for his contribution to history ("even if the specimens are invented the class does exist"), but went on to sum up his importance in the fact that he had pointed out the historiographical desideratum for the next generation:

> Combining materials drawn from scattered sources, [Scott's novels] have given us pictures of past days, which what is commonly called History had neglected to afford. We now feel more fully that dates and names,—nay, even the articles of a treaty, or the issue of a battle, although desirable pieces of knowledge, are yet trivial, compared with the importance and utility of being

> able to penetrate below that surface on which float the great events and stately pageants of the time.... Great changes in the conditions and opinions of a people will silently and gradually take place, unmarked by any signal event; whilst events the most striking, and apparently important, will glitter and vanish like bubbles in the sun, and leave no visible trace of their effect.... At present we have only the extremes. We have the stately political history and the gossiping memoir.... The public now desire to see these requisites well blended; and to this growing desire we conceive no slight impulse has been given by the works of the author of Waverley.[110]

It would appear from such comments that Scott's importance lay as much in the history he allowed his readers to imagine as in the fictionalized history he actually wrote and that fed the "growing desire" for something else. This imagined history would not only deal with highly relevant and hitherto neglected topics of significance for the general public but be fully narrativized to boot: "A History, which, to accuracy and deep research, shall add a comprehensive view of all that is most conducive to the welfare of a nation, and indicative of its condition, and which shall describe with the graphic vigour of romance."[111]

Lister's imagined history bears a striking resemblance to Hayden White's comments on the "value of narrativity." It is interesting to note in the light of what I said earlier about the difficulties of achieving such narrativity in practice, that Lister considered the idea of accurate, narrativized History as an ideal that Scott's novels indicated or promised, but that they did not themselves realize. His high expectations regarding the possibility of a new sort of historiography recall Jeffrey's praise for *Old Mortality* and were almost a direct echo of Macaulay's 1828 essay on "History," in which the historian praised Scott for having opened up areas of the past that had hitherto been neglected by historians: "He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated" and do so "without employing a single trait not authenticated by ample testimony."[112] The novelist, in other words, has produced "valuable" history, but he has also pointed toward a history that would be even more valuable because not dependent on an invented plot: an imminent history. Or, to use Macaulay's own phrase, an "imaginary history" (307) written by the "perfect historian" (306). The fact that a particular sort of history is imagined does not mean that it can also be written. As I shall show in the next chapter, it was to prove difficult for historians to turn Scott's promise into real coin.

In history as elsewhere, value is measured in relation to the availability of alternatives. At this point, it is worth recalling the "scarcity principle"

that Michel Foucault saw as endemic to the cultural realm:[113] since not all of the possibilities for representing the world are realized at any given time, those who participate in culture have to make do with whatever is available to them, even if this means that certain products acquire a value and a function that in the best of all possible worlds they would not have. It follows that a historical novel may play a role as (imperfect) history for those who, by choice or necessity, do not have access to alternative accounts. It also follows from this scarcity principle that a historical novel may be perceived, as it was by Macaulay and many of his contemporaries, as a defective improvement on existing alternatives. To recall what was said earlier about novelty and foregrounding: a single feature of a work—for instance, its theme—may be foregrounded because it is perceived as a contribution to the development of historical writing, while the other features of the work are temporarily ignored.

The fact that the value of a fictitious history sometimes lies in the "sober" history it promises does not mean that readers immediately go in quest of the latter. Some readers simply rest content with an imperfect faute de mieux history, satisfied that it is at least an improvement on existing accounts or simply pleased with having a rattling good tale to read with the extra aura of having some basis in fact. In the short or the long term, however, some readers do not rest content with merely "imperfect history." They may come to the reading of the novel already armed with information that contradicts what is presented in the narrative, with a general view of events that is incompatible with the interpretation being offered, or with a professional commitment to empirical research. As we have seen, specific knowledge of the period can influence the attitudes to the fictionality of the text, particularly if it is coupled to a vested interest in the representation of the topic, be this social or professional. On the one hand, there are the "ramifying readers," whose cooperation is activated in such a way that they supplement the novel with ever more new information, reinforcing its status as representation while replacing its specifics by analogies from sober history. On the other hand, there are the "resisting readers," who adduce counterevidence in an attempt to establish the novel's status as a "misrepresentation." The reaction of ramifiers and resisters to *Old Mortality* was clearly linked to the charged character of the events depicted (a charge notably absent from *Ivanhoe*) and to the reader's identification with particular groups in the past; as such, it provides support for Nancy Partner's suggestion that there is a correlation between people's sense of belonging to a polity and their readiness to question the boundaries between the fictitious and the factual in any given instance.[114] For the pursuit of history as the ground of shared experience is dependent on individuals' having a vested interest in the truth of certain matters.[115]

It is striking how quickly Scott's star seems to have waned as a result of its own fertility as a model for writing about the past. Lister praised Scott in 1832 for having taken the study of history a major step forward by pointing to imaginary histories that could be written by others. By 1847, the same Lister was wondering in a suggestively titled "Walter Scott—Has History gained by his Writings?" if Scott had not done more damage than good in introducing fiction into the writing of history and if the promise he had held out had not become bogged down in clichés. The promise of a new "sober" history had not been realized: Scott's own works had continued to perpetuate "intimate and substantial misrepresentations of historical periods," and he had inspired a swarm of essayists and article writers to indulge in "historical fancy" rather than in systematic history: "Let us not look at Scott, but at his imitators . . . pathology is the test of physiology."[116]

The perennial problem with the historical novel in its various forms may not be that it is a hybrid but that it necessarily holds out promises that can never be delivered. Regardless, the case of Scott indicates the importance of recognizing that, although we may long to impose our interpretations on the past and have "real events possess the formal attributes of the stories we tell about imaginary events," it may be difficult in practice to write the history we envisage.

The historical novel à la Scott offers defamiliarizing scenes from the past in a way that nevertheless allows for identification with the loves and losses of yore, at the same time as it gestures expectantly toward a nonfictional account of the same events to which the reader might at some future time have access. If perfect history (complete, accurate, coherent, relevant) is not immediately available or, to recall Jeffrey's review, if "authentic history" is "woefully imperfect," then a novel might offer a first step in the right direction. In this way, the case of the historical novel suggests the theoretical importance of considering the relation between 'fiction' (as acceptable invention) and historical representation not merely as a static one involving fixed options but as a diachronic one. As Vaihinger already put it in his *Philosophie des Als-ob,* fiction is a "temporary representation" that tends toward its replacement by something else.[117] This "tending toward" may, of course, turn out to be a permanent state and offers no guarantee that the alternative will ever come.

Chronic Tensions

In March 1996, a brief article by Ben Shephard appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* commenting on Pat Barker's award-winning *Regeneration* trilogy (1991–95) about World War I. Faced with the possibility that

Barker's account of shell shock and its treatment might become received wisdom for the general public, Shephard was above all concerned with criticizing the novel for its mistakes—terms like "wrong" and "false" pepper his text. His main complaint was that Barker's fictional story about the experience of shell shock is fundamentally flawed because of its hodiecentrism (post-Freudian precepts are projected back onto a pre-Freudian world) and its reliance on fashionable but "unreliable" historiographical sources (principally a number of studies suggesting that shell-shock syndrome was a form of male hysteria). The time Barker did spend on researching her topic, Shephard suggested, could have been more usefully applied to other, more recent studies dealing with the complexities of shell shock. These complexities were missing, he believed, from Barker's faithful recycling of "modern academic clichés," against which he set the reality of the wartime experience as he had studied it in other sources.[118]

A novel that is "false"? At first sight, it might seem that Shephard puritanically missed the point that a novelist is free to invent. He was "scandalized by pleasure," to recall the title of Wendy Steiner's recent work, operating according to a fundamentalist denial of the artist's freedom to deviate from established fact.[119] There may well be an element of truth in such accusations. But it can also be argued that Shephard's criticism of the *Regeneration* trilogy as a misrepresentation of shell shock and its treatment was simply taking the novel's status as a *historical* novel, a novel representing a particular period in the past, to its logical conclusion. That the novel is about real events is made explicit by the publishers in their blurbed quotations from various reviews praising the work for its general insights into "war" and for its particular insights into the First World War, all of this together with the usual disclaimer that "This is a work of fiction" where characters and incidents are either imaginary or "used fictitiously." In this way, Barker (and many of the historical novelists working today) remains true to the tradition of Scott. The novel is sold as a novel *about* events and characters known to be real, and arguably its success would not have been the same had it been an antiwar novel set in some never-never land inhabited only by fictitious characters.[120] But as we have seen in the case of Scott, novelists sometimes find it hard to have their historical cake and eat it too. If the representational function of the novel is taken seriously, then some readers like M'Crie and Shephard may beg to disagree with its version of events and use their opposition to the novel as a stepping-stone to giving a supplementary account or an alternative one.

In emphasizing the ways in which a fictional narrative may have a representational function, I too may be open to the charge of having shown a puritanical disregard for the aesthetic, playful dimensions of Scott's novels. After all, examples may be found of readers who praised Scott's work

for its aesthetic qualities. Thus the *British Review* found the manners of long ago "irresistibly attractive" when "represented in a just and vigorous manner" and embodied in "a romantic story, surrounded with majestic scenes, and displayed with gigantic features and vivacious colouring" (185). It has not been my purpose to deny the aesthetic dimension of Scott's works or to deny that this may have dominated over all other functions for some readers of historical novels. Instead, my concern has been with highlighting the ways in which the aesthetic dimension of his novels works alongside or in conjunction with their representational function. It is in this very idea of a composite text that the similarities between the "realist" historical novel in the tradition of Scott and more recent experiments in postmodern "historiographical metafiction" emerge. While the latter differ from Scott in that they self-consciously seek to undermine the realistic illusion and thematize the limits of our knowledge of the past, they too bring hybridity into play as a structural principle.

I began my discussion of Scott by referring to Manzoni's disillusionment with the historical novel: a misbegotten genre combining historical oil and fictitious water, it gave off no light. In analyzing Scott's compositional methods and the reactions to *Old Mortality,* I hope to have proved Manzoni wrong. Where he saw hybridity, exemplified by the historical novel, as illegitimate and unviable, I have shown how such hybridity can be functional in allowing certain aspects of the past to be (imperfectly) represented and in providing a sounding board for alternative histories with fewer shortcomings or, as in the case of "historiographic metafiction," for alternative views of history.

The theoretical lesson to be drawn from this is not, as Manzoni argued, that the historical novel is an inherently unviable genre that should therefore be avoided. Instead, the hybridity of the historical novel—its structural equivocations and tensions—can be taken as paradigmatic for the fact that imperfection and chronic dissatisfaction are an endemic part of all historical writing, indeed of representation *tout court*.

2

Representability

Cultural History and the Fear of Long Books

> This work bears the title of an essay in the strictest sense of the word. No one is more conscious than the writer with what limited means and strength he has addressed himself to a task so arduous. . . . It is the most serious difficulty of the history of civilization that a great intellectual process must be broken up into single, and often into what seem arbitrary, categories in order to be in any way intelligible. It was formerly our intention to fill up the gaps in this book by a special work on the art of the Renaissance—an intention, however, which we have been able only to fulfil in part.
>
> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*

Historiographical Fatigue

"Especially when it comes to histories, we are all frightened by long books," wrote Paul Lacroix ("bibliophile Jacob") in his 1850 preface to Anquetil's popular *Histoire de France* (1805). Anquetil, the bibliophile argued, had basically rewritten in an abbreviated form the *grandes histoires* written by Dupleix, Mézeray, Daniel, and Velly, and in doing this he had mercifully saved the public a considerable amount of time. Whereas it would take more than two years, ten hours a day, to read all the original documents relating to the history of France, the whole History of France was now economically reduced to a mere ten days' reading.[1]

It is not easy to find among historical writings an equivalent to the sonnet form. It would seem that it is peculiar to histories to be long. Moreover, they are often felt to be *too* long—too long for the reader who has to plow through them, too long for the historian who has to produce them. Hence the perennial production of abridgments, *précis, tableaux synoptiques.* That stamina is required of the reader is illustrated by Linda Orr's vivid description of the sheer physical effort and the amount of time (months, not days) involved in reading the massive histories of the French Revolution that are the subject of her *Headless History* (1990).[2] That stamina is also required by the historians who write such long texts is illustrated by their many lamentations over the colossal dimensions of the task they have undertaken.

The historian Mézeray, for example, whose work Anquetil subsequently abridged, bemoaned the almost impossibly large scale of the work he had set out to accomplish in his *Histoire de France, depuis Faramond jusqu'à maintenant* (1643–51). As he wrote in his preface, the work seemed to get bigger and bigger even as he wrote it, forcing him to adopt strategies to help the "tired reader" make it to the end. In spite of its monstrous length, however, he considered that his two-thousand-page history was still incomplete. Thus he ended his preface by admitting the lacunae in his history: to know the history of France perfectly, by rights you should also know the history of all its neighboring countries, from the customs and deeds of the various classes to the layout of all their rivers and mountains.[3] Although his history was already some two thousand pages long, then, ideally it should have been even longer. In keeping with the sense that his magnum opus was already overly magnum, Mézeray followed it up by an *Abrégé chronologique, ou Extraict de l' "Histoire de France"* in 1667; in keeping with the sense that the opus was still incomplete, he also followed it up by a supplementary history dealing with the period "before Clovis" (1685).

This paradoxical state of being overextended and yet unfinished would seem to be endemic to representations of the past. Whoever sets out to write history risks running into difficulties with what Susan Stewart calls "scale-management."[4] Some books prove unfinishable according to the historian's original plan, while others are simply not finished at all. Whether or not historians as a group run a greater risk of exhaustion than other professionals is an open question. In any case, the characteristic image that emerges from the self-representations and biographies of historians is that of self-sacrificing laborers involved in an immense undertaking.[5] To a certain extent, this emphasis on the scale of the enterprise and the difficulties in carrying it out can be seen as a conventional image designed to enhance the seriousness of their work or to emphasize its intellectual demands. Alternatively, foregrounding difficulties can be seen as a *captatio benevolentiae* designed to highlight the his-

torians' virtuousness as they knuckle down to their responsibilities. After all, historiography was traditionally seen as one of the most dignified of discursive genres, and emphasizing the "heaviness" of the historian's task has also served to accentuate the relative "lightness" and facility of fly-by-night writers of fiction. Thus Fernand Braudel wrote of the wonderful flexibility of the novel in the preface to his history of the Mediterranean, implicitly contrasting this freedom to the even more admirable discipline of historiography and its meritorious difficulties. "Ideally perhaps one should, like the novelist, have one's subject under control, never losing it from sight and constantly aware of its overpowering presence. Fortunately or unfortunately, the historian has not the novelist's freedom."[6]

There is undoubtedly an element of rhetoric in all of this moaning, groaning, and shouldering of burdens. But neither the responsibilities nor the difficulties of the historian's task are merely imaginary. As the incidence of unfinished works testifies, there is a basis for this corporate image in actual practice. Indeed, Geoffrey Elton's well-known manual, pregnantly entitled *The Practice of History,* warns the apprentice historian in highly expressive terms that the path from research to writing is one of increasing difficulty:

> If historians thought their labours involved nothing but research, they would lead easier lives. Honest and thorough research can be exhausting and tedious. But honest and thorough writing will certainly be those things, and the agony of forcing thought into order and pattern should not be despised.... The more the historian knows, the more he despairs of his ability to tell it, for the sheer complexity of the historical process stands inexorably in the way.[7]

In suggesting that the labors of the historian culminate in the "agony" of writing, in the agony of reducing the "sheer complexity of the historical process" to a comprehensible and readable text, Elton was reiterating a commonplace. The Abbé de Mably's "De la manière d'écrire l'histoire" (1783) was written almost two hundred years earlier, but it also presented historical writing as the most difficult of all forms. Again, the rub lay in the quantity of the materials:

> Order is the most necessary of things in a piece of writing... But I suspect that a historian has more trouble than any other writer in finding that order. He is overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of his materials; if he does not succeed in building these into a regular edifice, the reader will become lost in a labyrinth with no way out (*un labyrinthe sans issue*).[8]

The difficulties inherent in composing readable histories have thus long been accepted as an inevitable part of historiographical practice. But theo-

rists have paid little attention to their implications (the one notable exception is Philippe Carrard's *Poetics of the New History* [1992], which considers the gap between agenda and realization in the case of Annales historiography). In general, theorizing about the nature of historiographical practice has been premised on the principle of success and the auctorialist assumption that all historical works are completed according to whatever plan the historian had in mind. In *History and Tropology* (1994), Frank Ankersmit describes the modern conception of the historian as a transcendent subject who can make sense of the past by viewing it from a single point of view, an image of the historian's power that is now under review in postmodernism. The moaning and groaning mentioned above, together with the obvious failure to finish many histories, suggests that the imposition of a single point of view may never have been more than a guiding ideal, and thus that variations on singular points of view in historical texts may not in practice be restricted to postmodernist experiments. The principle of success, which informs much of the study of high culture (that is, the idea that everything always goes according to the author's plan), makes it difficult to account for Mézeray's sense of inadequacy. Or, to take another example among many, for Burckhardt's statement to the effect that not only had his history of the Renaissance cost him a lot of toil and trouble, but the end product, for all its length, still constituted only a part of what he had originally intended. This had also been the case with Macaulay, who set out in the footsteps of Scott to write a history of England from James II to the present day, but who never in fact made it beyond 1702 despite almost twenty-two years of writing and several changes of plan.[9]

In this chapter, I want to link up the difficulties experienced by historians with scale management to the difference, which has received a lot of attention in recent years, between the events that are the objects of historical research and the historical discourse about them. In doing so, I want to elaborate in more detail on the problem of representability, which I briefly discussed in Chapter 1.

Discourse and the Complexity of Events

Some twenty-five years after the publication of Hayden White's *Metahistory* (1973), there seems to be a general consensus that language is not a passive mirror that can be held up to a reality that is coherent *an sich*, but instead an instrument for creating intelligibility whose use is regulated by particular conventions and forms. The structures of language dictate, for example, that we write in sentences even when we want to describe specific objects in the world that are not structured with a subject, verb, and

object in the way sentences are. To the extent that historical writing, like all other forms of discourse, creates meaning it can rightly be said to be fictive. In making this point, however, Hayden White has tended to overstate the powers of language and the will power of the individual behind its use by apparently granting complete autonomy to discourse with respect to its subject matter (in this his *Metahistory* reflected the linguistic idealism characteristic of structuralism). While he has recognized the necessity for historians to create "conditions of representability" for their material by selecting and rearranging it, he has not elaborated on the possible difficulties they may encounter in creating such conditions, more or less presuming that "when there's a will there's a way."[10] My analysis of Scott's narrativization of events and the mixed reactions to it has suggested that creating conditions of representability may be easier said than done.

At this juncture, it is useful to recall Kendall Walton's brief suggestion to the effect that there may be a causal relation between a text (or painting) and that which it represents:

> For something to be an object of a representation it must have a causal role in the production of the work; it must in one way or another figure in the process whereby the representation came about, either by entering into the intentions with which the work was produced or in some more "mechanical" manner.[11]

In arguing here for a causal relation between that which is represented (the *representandum*) and the presentation, Walton is by no means suggesting that the former regulates in all respects what is presented to the reader or viewer, but that it does so in some respects. The painting of a house, for example, is shaped according to the perspective and the technical means available to the painter, and in this sense it is autonomous. But if it functions as a representation, this is because it is also seen to retain some features, however minute, that are also found in actual houses (something resembling a roof, for example). When this idea is applied to the domain of history, it follows that the historical events that are the object of representation will affect in some way the production of the discourse about them. In what follows, I shall argue that the difficulties endemic to the task of the history writer are an *effect* of the attempt to represent a multifariously accessible, ever-ramifying historical subject that resists the writer's attempt to present it in a particular way.

Several related forms of resistance come into play. To begin with, there is the resistance to knowledge of the past caused by the inevitably fragmented and incomplete nature of the historical record—we may know something happened, but not how or to whom (I'll get back to this issue in

Chapter 3). Second, there is resistance from other interpreters of the same events within the communal project of getting to know, understand, and make known the past. Since history is the domain of collective experience, past events are often the focus of conflicting interpretations motivated by conflicting interests in the latter-day society. This means that a new account of a topic will presumably have to defuse the significance of any existing rival accounts and be able to withstand criticism from succeeding accounts if they are to have any chance of being accepted as history. As we have seen in the case of *Old Mortality,* the social affects of the Covenanting struggle fed into the resistance offered by the Presbyterians to Scott's account of events and forced him into defending his point of view. (In an earlier work I showed with respect to the representation of the French Revolution how the attempt to defuse rival interpretations can be written into the account of the past and cause the emphasis to be placed on certain phenomena rather than on others.)[12] Third, there is the resistance offered by the events, as these are known to have occurred, to the interpretation being proposed. Dominick LaCapra has written in this regard of the "injunction to face facts that may prove embarrassing for the theses one would like to propound or the patterns one is striving to elicit."[13] Elsewhere I have shown the strategies used by historians of the French Revolution to mitigate the significance of events that threaten to contradict their thesis.[14] Fourth, there is the resistance offered by certain events to interpretation as such and to our capacity to understand them. As Cathy Caruth has eloquently argued in her *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), traumatic events by definition escape our attempts to grasp and represent them in a satisfying way. In what follows here, I want to reflect on a related type of resistance, that is, the resistance offered by events to discourse as such. While this resistance will certainly be aggravated in the case of events that have been personally or collectively traumatic, it is not necessarily linked to trauma in any strict sense and should be seen instead as an inescapable and everyday feature of historical representation. In making this point, I follow Elaine Scarry, who has argued that knowing the world always involves a qualified victory over the resistance of the world to representation in the limited structure of words.[15]

Imagine a historian were to have access to all the information extant regarding the past and imagine s/he were to write all of this information down and describe all the causal relations and similarities between phenomena, the result would be an impossible book, so long as to be unreadable, a Borgesian Library of Babel. Even if such an exhaustive work were physically possible (which it arguably has become given hypertextual digitalization), the unimaginably vast amount of information it would contain would ultimately be unsatisfactory as history in the customary sense. For if everything is presented as equally significant, then nothing is meaningful anymore; and

the more one *fait divers* in Shandyan fashion ramifies into another, the more unclear it becomes that there is a path leading out of the labyrinth. (As Hugh Blair put it, a writer "will soon tire the Reader, if he goes on recording, in strict chronological order, a multitude of separate transactions, connected by nothing else, but their happening at the same time.")[16]

The problem with such a Shandyan enterprise is not just the physical limitations of the medium, but more fundamentally, the logic of discursive representation. The cultural function of discourse is not to reproduce the world in all its infinitely crisscrossing plenitude, but to produce meaningful statements about experience by reducing and selecting from all the information that is virtually available. Seen from this point of view, historical representation can be characterized by a chronic struggle between the obligation to stick to what is known of the past and the desire to treat relevant aspects of the past in a coherent manner: the eternal struggle between the real and the intelligible, as Roland Barthes called it.[17] Details help heighten the realism of an account and hence its status as a representation of real events. But the more detail concerning events, persons, and circumstances a writer includes, the more the discourse not only resembles the complex and ramifying structure of events but also becomes digressive or fragments into smaller, "snapshot" units. The problem is not merely a rhetorical one, a matter of tiring or pleasing the reader: if a historical account resembles events too much, then it fails to carry out its discursive role in making sense out of them. Historical meaning is produced in the gap between the nature of events and the demands of discourse, but so also is formlessness, fragmentation, digression. These are the ragged edges that Melville saw surrounding stories based on actuality.

In being represented through discourse, then, past events—or, failing this, our unsuccessful attempts to understand those events—are transformed in principle into an intelligible pattern whereby they become "usable."[18] And if it is to be followable by someone else, and "come to" a point, an utterance cannot be endless. Thus Hugh Blair, exemplifying the rhetorical tradition in historiography, stipulated in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* that the first duty of historians was to impart "unity" to their material, so that their work "should not consist of separate unconnected parts merely, but should be bound together by some connecting principle" and make the impression on the mind "of something that is one, whole and entire."[19] Paul Veyne recently made more or less the same point in arguing that historiography is premised on the possibility of writing truthfully about the past in the form of a coherent and intelligible book.[20] (It is worth pointing out that Veyne, along with most other theorists, still considers the "book," as distinct from the short article or dictionary entry, as the paradigmatic form for history.)

Where Blair's idea of "connecting principle" is linked to the *historia magistra vitae* tradition, which sees the function of historical writing as the communication of some moral or philosophical lesson, Veyne's "intelligibility" is linked to the demand that historians write about the past in order to explain the occurrence of particular phenomena or to interpret disparate phenomena as part of some configurational whole.[21] In recent years, there has also been a growing interest in the *un*intelligibility of events and our inability to make sense of them (the current interest in trauma is part of the same tendency). I shall discuss this negative approach to history at greater length in the next chapter. Suffice it here to note that discourses recognizing the unintelligibility of events do not necessarily become "pointless." Instead, the focus of their argument shifts from past events to the attempts made to make sense of them and to our experience of the past. Even here, then, the basic principle holds true that the more coherent the argument and the more evidence it seems (implicitly or explicitly) to account for, the more functional and durable it is as a representation of past or present realities.[22]

Discursive coherence has proven notoriously difficult to describe, arguably because it is linked to an aesthetic appreciation of well-madeness. According to Teun van Dijk's basic typology, coherence is provided by logic (propositions are linked as steps in reasoning), association (propositions are linked by their common reference to some experiential domain), and narrativity (propositions are linked by their reference to an unfolding situation), or by a mixture of these principles.[23] However useful such general categories may be in throwing light on larger patterns, they fail to take into account the historical variations in what writers and readers find "well made" and their relative tolerance toward imperfection. What a later generation finds acceptable may have come over as confusing, fragmentary, or shapeless to earlier readers (and vice versa). This historical variation applies among other things to what is considered a well-made narrative—a fact largely ignored in theoretical discussions among historians, which have tended to approach narrative as an ahistorical category. Exemplifying the historicity of discursive forms, the medievalist Eugène Vinaver described how many of his predecessors had failed to appreciate medieval narratives because of their apparent lack of overall design; he himself argued that there was such a design, but that this involved unfamiliar "interlacing" principles (which have since become more widely recognized).[24]

As is well known, the idea that discursive coherence could be based on hybrid principles and that it could even be relatively "chaotic" was a particular theme in romanticism. Thus Stendhal defended the looser organization of romantic plays, based on multiple intersecting plots in the style of Shakespeare, against the neoclassical unitary plots à la Racine.[25] Thomas

McFarland has shown in his *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin* (1981), moreover, that romanticism involved not only an appreciation of looser plot structures along with a tolerance for incidental details of *couleur locale* extraneous to the plot, but also a new acceptance of the legitimacy of fragmentary, incomplete, and "open" forms that could be added to indefinitely.[26] In a book suggestively entitled *Representation and Its Discontents* (1992), Azade Seyhan has shown how these aesthetic changes relating to discursive well-madeness were a response to the realization, precipitated by the dramatic changes of the French Revolution, which drove a wedge between the present and the past, that it was impossible to represent reality in its entirety and as a totality. The appreciation of "sublimity" belongs to these aesthetic developments, a theme to which I will return in Chapter 3. The point to note here is that the changes in discursive proprieties associated with romanticism intersected in complex ways with a period of historiographical experimentation and with rapid social change.

To say that all discourse is expected to come to a point, to be well made according to current standards, does not mean that all topics prove to be representable in a coherent form or that such a state is ever fully achievable. Guiding principles are no more than that, and they are often mutually incompatible.[27] As W. B. Gallie writes,

> Many serious and important historical works are not real unities. We could say of them, as Ranke said harshly of his own first book: all this is still histories, it is not yet history. And the obvious inference would be that such books, despite the important materials and the valuable individual judgements and descriptions that they contain, must be considered failures: failures, that is, from the point of view of presenting as a followable unity the great theme which they sought to bring to life in a single work.[28]

The fact that discursive coherence continues to be a regulative idea in historiographical practice, but that practice often falls short of this ideal, is confirmed by a random sample from the *American Historical Review,* where one work is praised for its "coherent structure" and the "clarity, consistency, and absorbing quality of [its] argument,"[29] while other works are criticized for the "occasional fracturing of the story" and "loss of overall forward movement";[30] for the lack of a "firmer final outline";[31] and for an "essay-like structure," which "makes for repetition while obscuring links in the author's argument."[32] Such criticisms of particular works can be seen as symptomatic of the structural disjunction, underlying all attempts to represent the past, between the desire for correspondence and the desire for discursive coherence. They can also be read as symptoms of the fact that changes in discursive mores take place gradually and that experimentation

inevitably leads to some critical resistance, in particular the charge of being digressive or chaotic. If incoherence always threatens historical writing by the very nature of the representational enterprise, it would seem to be aggravated when certain topics are being treated. Which brings me to the matter of relevance.

History beyond Battles: Relevance and Representability

In practice, the starting point for historical representation is not the totality of "what happened," but some more or less broadly defined topic that is construed as "historical," that is of importance for understanding "the past" and/or our relationship to it: the development of a civilization or nation-state, the course of a particular war, sexual practices or attitudes to smell at a particular period, anonymous peasants, and so on. Even those who claim to represent "universal history," "world history," or "European history" in fact treat only some particular aspect of the past, an aspect of the past which is sometimes explicitly, and more often implicitly, taken as paradigmatic for "History" or what Robert Berkhofer has called the "Great Story" of the past as a whole.[33] Following Sperber and Wilson's "relevance principle," it can be said that the very act of writing a history implies that the chosen topic and the particular argument being made about it are somehow of interest to those who will get to read it: by throwing new light on an old topic, by introducing a new topic that has some bearing on contemporary realities, or by providing enjoyment in the historian's skill in reconstructing a lost world (I shall be getting back to this possibility in Chapter 4).[34]

If the reality of historical phenomena is fixed once and for all, then their relative importance changes according to what historians consider worthwhile inquiring into and writing about. In the rhetorical tradition of belles lettres, which was influential at least up until Madame de Staël's *De la littérature* (1800), history was reckoned among the most "serious" and dignified of the literary genres (we have heard echoes of this in the Presbyterian dismay at Scott's having brought history "down" to the trivial level of the novel). And in keeping with this serious status, history was expected like tragedy to deal with appropriately dignified topics—matters of state and the lives of political leaders. In contrast, the novel emerged as the locus par excellence for treating the lives of private persons against the background of contemporary mores, and it thus filled in part the breach left open by historians whose work did not extend, as de Staël put it, to "the lives of private men, to feelings and characters from which no public events did issue."[35] Thus when Macaulay, having been persuaded by Scott's work that

historiography had become the victim of its own dignity, decided in the famous third chapter of his *History of England* (1848) to break with historiographical decorum by giving a detailed account of the material conditions of everyday life in the seventeenth century, he was widely acclaimed by some people. But he was savaged by the acerbic John Wilson Croker for having inverted the hierarchical relationship between history ("the figure of truth arranged in the simple garments of Philosophy") and trivial anecdote. The result was a "species of carnival history," an "old curiosity shop" filled with "bric-à-brac" rather than a coherent discourse, a "scrap-book history" rather than a history proper. For Croker (as for some recent commentators), trivial phenomena were as unfitting for historical discourse, and as unrepresentative of history as he conceived it, as imaginary ones.[36] And, as terms like "bric-à-brac" indicate, his criticism of triviality went together with a perception of Macaulay's history as being somehow random, pointless.

For reasons that often have to do with sociocultural changes outside the sphere of history writing as such, periods, persons, experiential domains that at one time seemed scarcely worth a passing comment in a discourse devoted to a different subject may be recognized at another period as potential subjects in their own right. Where previously they were at most worthy of mention as background detail designed to produce a realistic effect, they now become "nontrivial" and function as the lodestone of relevance that attracts fresh items of information and excludes others. Where previously certain aspects of experience were considered "natural" and unchanging, they now come to be seen as mutable and hence as historiographically interesting.[37] The "system of relevance" of the particular period thus dictates which subjects are considered more important and hence more worthy of being remembered in historical discourse—more representative of history or the experience of history—than others.[38] The counterpart of this sort of selection, of course, is that other areas of experience are effectively ignored as uninteresting, unintelligible, or otherwise unworthy of attention. In an interesting projection of a cognitive dilemma onto the field of events, the early Middle Ages were for long described as "chaotic," "obscure," "impenetrable."[39] It would appear that what counts in the constitution of a historical topic is not just the reality of the phenomena referred to but also the extent to which they seem to hold out the promise of Veyne's "coherent and intelligible" book or something resembling it.

In a chicken-and-egg way, then, relevance seems to be linked to representability: not only must the topic be worth talking about, but the historian must also have some idea of the sort of discourse to which the topic could give rise. The two criteria seem to go hand in glove. Thus Michelet hesitated to write a history of the sixteenth century on the grounds that it

was an "impossible project": "if the period is too short, there is no philosophical line to be drawn; if the period is even a little long, the work becomes monotonous."[40] If the Middle Ages seemed "confusing" and "obscure" to many generations, the cause appears to have lain not only in the lack of documented details concerning the earlier period (though this is an important factor), but also in a sense of its "chaotic" unrepresentability. The topic did not lend itself to representation according to the available models. In a culture where one of the most popular topics was the "history of France from the foundation of the monarchy," and where the treatments of this topic were generally organized according to the reigns of the different kings, it was not obvious what could be said historiographically about the period before the foundation of the monarchy and the formation of the polity, or indeed about subjects other than political or military ones.

It is undoubtedly true that recent decades have seen a particularly rapid extension of the repertoire of historical topics into all conceivable domains of human existence. But the creativity of contemporary historians in this regard should not blind us to the fact that extending the domain of historical inquiry beyond politics into the domain of culture has long been on the agenda and indeed can be seen as an integral part of historicism as it developed in the late eighteenth century. In what follows I want to elaborate further on the relationship between relevance and representability by looking at the faltering emergence of alternatives to "battle history" in the closing decades of the eighteenth century.

As early as 1785, Hugh Blair welcomed in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* what he saw as "the very great improvement" that had taken place in historical composition in recent years and that he linked above all to the work of Voltaire:

> It is now understood to be the business of an able Historian to exhibit manners, as well as facts and events; and assuredly, whatever displays the state and life of mankind, in different periods, and illustrates the progress of the human mind, is more useful and interesting than the detail of sieges and battles.[41]

Blair's enthusiasm for going beyond "sieges and battles," which in effect meant encroaching on the domain traditionally explored by novelists, was to be echoed with increasing frequency in the years following. By the time Jane Austen's character Catherine Morland complained in *Northanger Abbey* (1817) that "real" history was "uninteresting" because it dealt only with "the quarrels of popes and kings, wars and pestilences," she was already reiterating a commonplace.[42] The extensive praise meted out to Walter Scott for his portrayal of seventeenth-century manners in *Old Mortality* was part

and parcel of the same extension of history into new social and experiental domains which had hitherto been the preserve of novelists, as was the excitement generated by Macaulay's history written several decades later. Clearly working in the same tradition, J. Sarazin summed up in 1835 the principal developments in French historiography of the previous decades with the motto: "It is not enough, therefore, for the historian to relate in an interesting fashion the course of wars and diplomatic missions, the deaths and coronations of kings.... Nowadays much more is called for; people want an account of society as a whole, of everything that makes it what it is."[43]

This surge of history-beyond-battles can be explained in part by the growing demand for an approach to the past that would interest a middle-class public by treating aspects of experience with which they could empathize, by treating the development of social or ethnic groups with which they could identify, and by doing so in a manner that would engage their imaginations and their sympathies, thus allowing them, as it were, to experience the past anew and overcome its otherness.[44] This alternative history was often presented as a radical new departure; hence the negative "anything-but-battles" sort of formulation used to describe it. The priority of the historian must be to "make the silences of history speak," as Jules Michelet later put it,[45] or "to pass quickly over the points where history speaks, and to tarry over those where she is silent," to use the words of Augustin Thierry.[46]

The historical silence they were referring to was not a total silence, however, since these historians could climb on the shoulders of some predecessors. From 1814 onward there was Scott's work to be reckoned with, credited with having brought into the realm of historiography those changes among peoples that "silently" take place.[47] But from an even earlier stage there was the work, not only of other novelists with their interest in contemporary mores, but also of antiquarians with their broad interest in cultural artifacts from the past. For when attempts were made to define the proposed new history in positive terms (what was it to be about if it was going to ignore battles?), these often involved referring to subjects that were also being explored by the antiquarians of the period—topics relating to the very early periods of history, on the one hand, topics relating to what was generally referred to as "manners," on the other. This circumstantial connection between "manners" and "prehistory"—they were both "nonhistory" at the time—was also reflected in the fact that the study of past manners was generally considered a branch of archaeology.[48]

This appropriation by historians of antiquarian interests supports Arnaldo Momigliano's contention that it is difficult to overestimate the contribution of antiquarianism to the development of historicism and modern

history writing, since antiquarians carried out original research using a variety of sources into a huge range of human activities, at a time when historians "proper" were aiming for a coherent "philosophical" narrative that would bring together diverse items of information gleaned from secondary authorities under a single point of view.[49] The antiquarians' emphasis on research and collecting, rather than on literary composition, can be explained in part as a matter of priorities (the spadework had yet to be done). It was also the product of discursive conventions that deemed such topics inappropriate for treatment in history. Linked to this were the difficulties inherent in treating their chosen topics in traditional narrative forms as part of a single progression. In what follows, I want to elaborate on these difficulties by examining in some detail four cases that exemplify both the problems encountered by those wanting to treat new topics and the solutions they have come up with.

How does one make historical silences speak? and avoid long books?

Ad Nauseam: Le Grand d'Aussy's History of Private Life (1782)

Published in 1782, Le Grand d'Aussy's *Histoire de la vie privée des Français depuis l'origine de la Nation jusqu' à nos jours* clearly belonged to the late-eighteenth-century drive toward extending the range of historical inquiry into the domain of manners, beyond the scope of politics and state-sponsored wars into the realm of the domestic, the everyday, the private. Le Grand deliberately and modestly located his work in the margins of current historiographical practice, as a supplement to existing histories that picked up what they had left out. At the same time, he ambitiously intimated that his work was in fact more relevant to the ordinary "Frenchman," because of its domestic focus, than "proper" history focused on kings—a familial conception of history that seems to anticipate the current importance of genealogy as a historical endeavor:[50]

> The aims, design, and way of proceeding of the Historian are not mine. Our materials indeed are quite different; and in composing this work, I only use those materials that he excludes from his. Obliged, by the weighty events that he has to narrate, to avoid everything that is not important, he allows on stage only Kings, Ministers, Generals, and all that class of famous men whose talents and mistakes, actions and intrigues produce the happiness or unhappiness of the state. But the Bourgeois in the city, the Peasant in his cottage, the Gentleman in his castle, in short the Frenchman in the midst of his work and pleasures, in the midst of his family and children: that is what the

> historian cannot represent. But that is the picture of our fathers; it resembles a collection of family portraits; and, if I am not mistaken, this collection will interest us more than the other.[51]

But how was he to construct this history of private life, this "collection of family portraits"?[52] Organizing information on diachronic principles "from the origin of the nation to the present day" (as his title intimates) would still leave him with the double problem of deciding which phenomena were relevant to this history of "private life " (was "private life" one subject or many?) and in what order they should be treated.

On the logical grounds that the "history of the private life of a nation should begin, like that of the individual man, with the first and most important of his needs," Le Grand decided to devote the first volume of this ambitious work to the topic of food (this was to be followed by two more sections on furniture and dress, a tripartite quasi-narrative that, as Carrard has shown, is a perennial favorite among historians down to the present day).[53] Having honed in on the subtopic of food, and made his plan for future volumes, Le Grand was then left with the problem of how to organize all the information he had gathered relating to his gustatory theme. He described graphically in his preface the tremors of terror (reminiscent of Elton's "agony" mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) that went through his body when he realized how much detail he had to deal with on a subject that no one had ever treated before:

> I found myself in possession of several thousand notes, none of which was longer than a few lines. I admit that at the sight of this terrifying chaos, from which somehow I had to compose a continuous history [*une histoire suivie*], my entire body shuddered; I remained for some time in a sort of defeated stupor; and even now that the work is finished, I cannot recall that moment of panic without experiencing again a feeling of involuntary terror.[54]

Having presumably recovered enough from this moment of terror to get on with writing, Le Grand ordered his information systematically on analytic principles more reminiscent of the dictionary than of narrative. He spiced up the account here and there with a "curious anecdote" (for example, about the Gaulish custom of serving drinks in human skulls), but in general the diachronic dimension implied in the title "from the origin of the nation to the present day" is a feature of the individual sections rather than of the work as a whole. The amount of detail, in the sense of the number of aspects of eating that are systematically covered, is extraordinary, the work moving from an account of the different types of ingredients used

(the first chapter is devoted to grains, vegetables, fruits; the second to meats, poultry, game, fishing and so on) to an extensive section on drinks and wine, to an account of the utensils used for cooking and dining-room furnishings, to an account of mealtimes and the rituals of hand washing, to an account of banquets. As this abbreviated list of topics suggests, there are local connections between the different chapter sections, each of which is usually conceptually linked to the one preceding or following it (one section is a specification with respect to another, for example, or both treat members of the same graded series or aspects of the same phenomenon). The global coherence of the work as a whole, however, is much less evident, consisting only of a gradual, conceptual progression from the preparation of ingredients to actual eating (at most a very "quasi" or minimal form of narrative dealing with generic rather than specific phenomena). And having reached the act of eating, the work stops, pending the publication of the planned sections on furnishings and clothing. As it turned out, these volumes were never written: the rest remained silence.

As Le Grand himself recognized in the preface to the second volume of this history of food, his actual treatment of what had seemed such a "seductive" topic had become an exhaustive (and exhausting) compilation of "cold, dry, minute details": in practice, he admitted, there seemed precious little of interest to say on the matter of "vegetables, sauces and stews."[55] Le Grand d'Aussy's reservations on the success of his work, together with the state of exhaustion in which it apparently left him, were presumably the reason why the subsequent volumes he had planned on clothing and furniture were never in fact written (nor did J. B. B. Roquefort, who reedited the work in 1815, deliver on *his* promise to finish it).[56] And Le Grand's own intuitions were confirmed by at least one critic who took him to task for wallowing in trivia: "In these three volumes of the history of food, the author's erudition is wasted on nugatory details which interest no-one: and the question of manners, of the private life of the French, which was to be the Author's subject, is not even touched upon."[57] Instead of the three-part study of aspects of private life, more important, instead of the promised possibility of sharing empathetically in the "work and pleasures" of earlier generations, the reader gets several hundred pages of food.

In practice, then, the "continuous history" Le Grand had wanted to write had gotten away. The theoretical interest of the topic—the idea of "private life"—was not matched by the interest of his account, which got lost in details unsupported by an overarching story or argument. While his ambition was to write a history with which the average "Frenchman" could identify, his systematic, impersonal presentation of aspects of food precluded any of that human interest which is such an important ingredient in full-fledged narrative.

The problems of scale management encountered by Le Grand were typical of eighteenth-century antiquarianism, which seemed to hover between the short treatise à la *Notes and Queries* and the amorphous, digressive, long book. The antiquarians' way to the printing press, Graham Parry writes, was "littered with the remains of enterprises that had failed or been abandoned."[58] Or, as Horace Walpole put it with his usual irreverence: "I love antiquities, but I scarce ever knew an antiquary who knew how to write about them. Their understandings seem as much in ruins as the things they describe."[59] Everett Zimmerman has argued in defense of the antiquarians that their very failures also contributed to novelistic explorations of looser forms and ultimately, therefore, to the romantic aesthetics mentioned earlier.[60] If Le Grand fails to find a perspective on his material that would allow him to distinguish the trivial from the significant, this can be explained at least in part by the difficulties of writing a history about poorly documented aspects of the past and about society "at rest" rather than in the midst of struggle. In this sense the history of everyday life is relatively unrepresentable. Wars, revolutions, conflicts seem to lend themselves more easily to representation as narrative. (In an unsettling turn of phrase, Charles Nodier once referred to the "novelistic attractiveness" of civil wars.)[61] But in what discursive form can cultural continuities and very gradual changes be represented? It is no coincidence that the "happy-ever-after" of marriage is usually also the end of the story.

In the final part of his work on food, Le Grand appealed for readerly clemency on the grounds of novelty: "As far as its numerous imperfections are concerned, I flatter myself that at least some of these will be forgiven me in light of the immense difficulties inherent in a subject that no one has ever treated until now."[62] Judith Walkowitz has written of the "narrative challenges posed by the new agenda of cultural history."[63] Le Grand's work points to the fact that the challenges themselves are not new, giving support to Elton's suggestion that the traditional predominance of political history over cultural history may have as much to do with the difficulties the latter entails as with a lack of interest as such.[64] How is a historiography conceivable without conflict and struggles for change? How can everyday experience ever be the subject of history since, despite its importance in our lives, it is by definition too banal to be remembered in any detail?

The more general theoretical conclusion to be drawn here is that the desire to treat a particular area of the past that seems representable is not itself a guarantee that the chosen topic is actually representable in a coherent history. Surprisingly in light of the emphasis placed nowadays on the role of perspective in historical writing (whereby it is presumed that everyone who writes has a sharply defined point of view), part of the problem for Le Grand and many of his contemporaries was finding a workable point

of view with which material could be brought together in a meaningful way. If events do not dictate the form in which they are represented (the basic tenet of narrativism), then it follows that those historians who choose a hitherto marginalized topic may also have to devise a new form in which to treat it or, what this often amounts to in practice, adapt existing discursive models as well as they can.

Bricolage: Amans-Alexis Monteil's History of the French (1828–44)

Writing on the eve of the French Revolution, Le Grand presented his history of private life as a supplement to the political history of France written by other "true" historians. Writing in the post-Revolutionary context, Amans-Alexis Monteil worked instead from the principle that the true historians were not those who treated political matters but instead those who treated the experiences of the population at large. Thus he rejected history as it had hitherto been written as mere *histoire-bataille* (his own term), indeed as *non*history, and pointed to the need for an alternative.[65] Or rather, alternatives. For although he called for a unitary, all-encompassing "national history" as the most relevant of topics, his programmatic statements in his *Les Français pour la première fois dans l'histoire de France* with the suggestive subtitle *Poétique de l'histoire des divers états* (1841) and his *Traité de matériaux manuscrits de divers genres d'histoire* (1836) indicate that this alternative history was in fact made up of many different topics united principally by their opposition to the elitist battle history it sought to replace. In the historiographical catechism-cum-advertisement that accompanies his *Traité,* for example, Monteil proclaimed all the different experiential and social domains that should be treated in a truly "national history." The sheer number of areas referred to (what follows below is just an excerpt) gives the sense of worlds-upon-worlds that are still unrepresented except by name, and hence that are open in principle for investigation:

> Is the History of France national history? / Yes.
> Is the history of encampments, battles, sieges, the births, marriages, deaths of kings, revolts of high-ranking vassals . . . national history? / No. . . .
> Should Frenchmen occupy an important place in the history of France? / Yes.
> Do they do so? / No. . . .
> Is there ever talk of farmers in the history of France? / No.
> Of tradesmen? / No.
> Of magistrates? / No.

> Of lawyers, attorneys, notaries? / No.
> Of doctors, surgeons, pharmacists? / No.
> Of painters, sculptors, engravers, musicians, artists? / No.
> Do Frenchwomen make up half of the nation? / Yes.
> Should national history talk about them? / Yes.
> Does the history called the History of France talk about them? / No....
> Has the history been written of administration, of the police, prisons, hospitals, delivery services, roads, canals, the military arts, the navy, public education, printing, sciences, literature, language? / No.
> Of feast days, spectacles, and the pleasures of the nation? / No....
> Will the nineteenth century end without at least one truly national history being written in Europe? / No.[66]

Not surprisingly, these questions were leading ones, and they led up to the assertion that this truly "national history," encompassing all these imagined topics, was already being written by Monteil himself, whose *Histoire des Français des divers états* was published in ten volumes between 1828 and 1844. (It is worth noting in passing that this ambitious self-advertisement in his *Traité* reflects not only Monteil's historiographical ideals but also his dependence on the commercial success of his writings in the absence of an independent income or institutional sinecure.)[67]

For all the novelty of the topics he set out to address within the framework of a "proper" history, Monteil's representation of these topics remained true to discursive tradition to the extent that he conceived his subject on a large scale and aimed to be complete. Although this revisionist "national history" focused on the structures of everyday life rather than on political change, it followed earlier histories, like those of Mézeray and Anquetil, in trying to write a "History of France" (a new "Great Story" to replace the old one). But how was he to represent in a readable history so many different aspects of national life, pertaining to so many different social groups, and over such a long period?

To begin with, Monteil organized his materials chronologically, devoting two volumes to each of the centuries from the fourteenth to the eighteenth. In choosing to focus on "the century" as his basic unit, Monteil was attempting to move beyond political regimes and the biographies of kings as the rhythm maker of his history. Underlying this innovatory chronological division of his material was the debatable assumption that there was roughly the same amount to be said about each century and that such periodization was somehow pertinent to his subject. (In a similar way, Jules Garinet's *Histoire de la magie en France, depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu'à nos jours* [1818] was organized according to the different reigns

of the French kings on the questionable assumption that magical practices developed according to the same rhythm as that of politics.)[68]

In practice, moreover, Monteil was to deviate from the scheme he set up in the earlier volumes. Whereas the first three parts of the *Histoire des Français* are simply given the title of the century they treat, the final parts devoted to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have also been given subtitles that indicate that political periodization (and linked to this, traditional historiographic divisions) has interfered with the strictly chronological division followed hitherto. Thus the seventeenth-century volumes supplement the work of Voltaire in being subtitled "parallèle entre le siècle de Louis XIV et l'histoire des Français des divers états," while the eighteenth-century volumes are subtitled "Les décades," a reflection of the fact that this part of Monteil's history is focused on the Revolution and has little or nothing to say about the rest of the century that is its ostensible subject.[69]

Although not always as obvious as in the final volumes, where it is reflected in the very titles, a similar divergence between the temporal framework and the actual content characterizes Monteil's work as a whole. Although "the century" provides a (more or less stable) framework within which to organize his information, Monteil's treatment of each century is not organized according to diachronic principles. As can be seen in the case of Le Grand, one of the principal challenges for those wanting to represent manners of long ago was to produce a "continuous history" and not a loosely organized collection, Croker's "scrap-book history." Le Grand opted for the systematic description of aspects of eating and drinking (taking French society since the origins of the monarchy as an underlying framework) and produced an unfinished work. In contrast, Monteil sought to adapt other discursive genres so as to increase the representability of his material by introducing some narrative elements. His way of proceeding may thus be likened to what Lévi-Strauss has called "bricolage intellectuel," intellectual makeshifting.[70] Like a do-it-yourselfer who uses an old motor to make a makeshift go-cart, Monteil tried to represent his topic by adapting existing discursive models to the new material: the letter, the travelogue, the colloquy, and the diary. The attractions of these genres presumably lay in the fact that, being informal and nonliterary, they could provide pretexts for commenting on items of everyday life as points of interest in their own right.

Volumes 1 and 2, dealing with the fourteenth century, take the form of a series of letters that a monk in Tours allegedly wrote to a friend in Toulouse. Each letter describes a different aspect of the society in which the monk is living, from lepers and the destitute, to clocks, burials, schools, prisons, and all the *arts et métiers*. The order in which the different topics are treated is

apparently random, and in principle the range of topics could have been extended at will. A very weak form of global, narrative coherence is provided by the fact that in the final letter the writer decides to contemplate his old age (he is nearly as old as the century) and look forward to death. Volumes 3 and 4 (fifteenth century) take the form of a *parlement*, with different groups coming together in the town hall of Troyes to debate the issue: Which group has the most grounds for complaint? (The use of the typically medieval *parlement* form as a device for introducing information about the fifteenth century indicates an attempt to establish an iconic relation between content and form.)[71] Representatives of thirty different groups, from the beggar to the astrologist, tell of their lot. Interspersed references to the situation in the town hall provide some sort of narrative continuity, but again the order in which the professions are treated is random and the ending a mere dropping of the curtain (the astrologist simply invites everyone to come outside and look at the stars). Volumes 5 and 6 (sixteenth century) take the form of a journey made by a Spaniard around France: the beginning and end are motivated by his arrival and departure, and each of the sections, dealing with topics as diverse as rivers, canals, roads, printing houses, and architecture, corresponds to an overnight stay. Volumes 7 and 8 (seventeenth century) resemble a journal, written by a young man on the make. The topics treated in the different sections sometimes form coherent sequences (chapters 43–47, for example, deal with different aspects of the transport business; 73 and 74 deal with printers and booksellers), but there is no global coherence: after a series of sketches of life at the court, the view of the century closes with a chapter in which an encounter with a bell ringer leads to a lengthy account of the different popular feasts celebrated every year in Paris. Finally, volumes 9 and 10 take the form of no less than 125 brief *décades* that, in apparently random fashion, treat different aspects of life during the eighteenth century and the Revolution; closure is provided to the series simply by pronouncing a prolix "adieu" to the eighteenth century.

In adapting other genres so as to (begin to) treat cultural history, Monteil was not the only *bricoleur*. The epistolary form could be found, for example, in Thomas Ruggles's *The History of the Poor: Their Rights, Duties, and the Laws Respecting Them; In a Series of Letters* (1793–94), in Philip Yorke et al.'s *Athenian Letters* (1743), and in Walter Scott's *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830). The Abbé Barthélemy's *Voyage du jeune Anarcharsis* (1788), with which Monteil was presumably familiar, exemplified the use of the travelogue for historiographical purposes (indeed, the abbé explicitly justified the use of the travelogue form on the grounds that it allowed one to include the sort of details that would not normally fit into history "proper").[72] The romance form seems to have been particularly popular

among the antiquarian-*bricoleurs*, presumably because of its narrativity and because of its association with the increasingly topical Middle Ages. It is worth noting here that one of Scott's earliest prose works consisted of the concluding chapters he had written for *Queenhoo Hall* (1808), a highly contrived medieval romance left unfinished by the antiquarian Joseph Strutt and originally conceived by him as a vehicle for conveying information about customs in the past.[73] (In this respect, Scott's innovations in the Waverley novels lay not so much in his idea of adapting the romance form to the representation of the past as in the way in which he adapted it under the influence of contemporary novelists like Maria Edgeworth [see Chapter 1, note 20].)

If Monteil was by no means the first to engage in historiographical *bricolage*, his history of France was nevertheless distinguished by the fact that it combined different genres within the framework of the same history, a choice that reflected both the conventional relation between discursive form and events and the difficulties of sustaining such a large-scale project on the basis of any one of the genres he had chosen. As the summary I have just given suggests, the discursive models Monteil chose gave him the freedom to add as many subtopics as he wished and to treat them basically in any order he wished. But being above all models for short pieces, they provided no unifying principle for a more extended, composite discourse. The end result is that Monteil's reader is given no compelling reason to read the items in the order presented, or indeed to continue reading to the end. The fact that each century is treated according to a different plan and involves different topics makes it difficult, moreover, to conceive of the continuity and differences between the individual centuries. It is presumably for this reason that Monteil's work, like that of Le Grand's, is not very well known today though it did go into five editions and was awarded the Prix Gobert by the Académie Française.[74]

As Prosper de Barante complained in his review of the first volume, Monteil's enormous erudition had produced "an old-curiosity shop" ("un magasin de curiosités") and not a history. Like a "cabinet de Sommerard," his work lacked a unifying point of view that would have revealed the links between all the garnered fragments he had gathered and endowed the information on offer with a significance within the framework of some overall argument.[75] This appreciation of the writer's erudition and criticism of his lack of argument is repeated in a number of other reviews, and summed up in the Larousse *Grand dictionnaire universel* :"The variety of frameworks, into which so many different subjects are stuffed, destroys the unity of the composition. The detailed vision of particular things, seen from so close up, conceals from the reader's view the general appearance of the nation, its development as a whole and the connections between the different

phases of its existence."[76] With his too detailed vision of things, Monteil had apparently succeeded in producing neither a discourse interesting in itself (as a story à la Scott might have been) nor a coherent argument drawing his historical information together into a singular "national history." While no critic seems to have thought the use of fictional frames successful, they were criticized not so much on principle (on the lines of "a historian should not invent") as for the way they obscured an already unfocused argument. As in Francis Palgrave's roughly contemporaneous *Truths and Fictions of the Middle Ages* (1837), the attempt to embody historical information in fictitious scenes leads to a lack of conciseness: the particular item of significant difference characterizing the age in question becomes lost in the sketch given of the circumstances in which it was encountered.

For all its shortcomings, however, Monteil's experiment with different models did enable him to draw attention to the historicity of an extraordinarily wide range of cultural phenomena, from feast days, superstitions, and schooling, to printing, food, canals, and the different branches of the weaving trade—in many cases, topics whose historical interest has subsequently been recognized by historians. Even if his treatment of these topics was less than successful or definitive, then, he did help establish them as potential topics for new treatment by others. Exemplifying the principle that histories tend toward their replacement by alternatives, which I discussed in relation to Scott's novels, Monteil's patently "imperfect" work was revised and replaced. Thus Charles Louandre, in preparing the fifth edition of the *Histoire des Français* in 1872, opted not to reproduce Monteil's ten-volume history as it had been conceived—"this book, whose subject is even vaster than the number of volumes"—but to revise it on more methodical and orderly lines.[77] To this end, he compiled from the unsurveyable mass of Monteil's material a number of smaller-scale works based on much more narrowly defined topics, supplemented by tables of contents, indices, and general sketches of the changes taking place in the period under consideration: *Histoire de l'industrie française et des gens de métiers* (1872), *La magistrature française* (1873), *Histoire agricole de la France* (1877), *Histoire financière de la France* (1881). To this list may be added *La médecine en France,* edited by A. Le Pileur in 1874. In these works, the singular "national history," envisaged but not fully realized by Monteil, was broken up into different "histories"—still not constructed around an argument, but at least shorter and more focused in the information they offered. The provision of indices also meant that Monteil's texts could now be accessed in many ways like a dictionary and read in part rather than as a whole as a possible source of information for entirely new histories.

In the "Avant-propos" (1842) to the *Comédie humaine,* the novelist Balzac also invoked "courageous and patient" Monteil as a pioneer who had done

his best to write the history of manners—"the history that had been forgotten by so many historians"—but who had been hampered by the lack of interest of his chosen form and his failure to grasp the driving force behind social life.[78] In face of the failures of Monteil, then, Balzac took up the baton and set out, with the help of fictitious "types," to treat again the still unwritten history of manners. (It is worth noting in passing that Balzac also failed to finish his work according to his original plan.)

A makeshift go-cart, although it is recognizable as a car, may nevertheless only sputter along. A bit of a makeshift go-cart, Monteil's work exemplifies the principle of "imperfect" representation. Although the models he adapted to treat his topic were not suitable in all respects, his attempt to represent as history so many features of everyday life remained recognizable as such—hence the attempts to revise his work by reworking it or by cutting it down to size. But Monteil's work also offers a particular variant of imperfection that it is worth pointing out here: fuzziness. By "fuzzy" representation, I mean an account of events that is susceptible to criticism, not for being a putative distortion of reality (misrepresentation) or for lacking the authority of evidence, but for not being clear about what topic exactly is being treated and what point is being made about it. This recalls Arthur Danto's argument to the effect that a representation, while it supposes the prior existence of what is represented, is paradoxically also the means by which the phenomenon represented comes into being for us. By virtue of being represented, it takes on reality for us: "something is 'real' when it satisfies a representation of itself, just as something is a 'bearer' when it is named by a name."[79] If this idea is transferred from the realm of painting to historical writing, then we can say that the evolution of topics is a gradual process that, through an accumulation of more or less imperfect representations, involves refining our understanding of the connections between events. But equally important, it also involves refining our sense of the topics about which histories can be written and about which controversies may arise. It is through the trial and revision of writing history that an image emerges of *what* there is to write about.

Fragmentation: Augustin Thierry's Narratives of the Merovingian Era (1840)

In the preface to his *Récits des temps mérovingiens*, Augustin Thierry too identified his topic as one that had been marginalized by earlier historians, while relevant for the public of his day. Where Monteil honed in on groups and aspects of experience that had simply been ignored historiographically, Thierry chose a topic—the sixth century—that had been dismissed as his-

toriographically irrelevant on the grounds that there was still such confusion in the country at that period that no sense could be made of it. As Thierry put it in his preface:

> It has almost become proverbial to say that no period of our history can measure up to the Merovingian period as regards confusion and barrenness. This period is the one that is most often abridged, that is most quickly passed over, that no one hesitates to leave aside. Such disdain is a reflection more of indolence than of thought, and if the history of the Merovingians is a little difficult to disentangle, it is by no means lacking in interest. On the contrary, it is so full of unusual features, original characters, and varied incidents that the only problem for the historian is to impose order on such a wealth of detail.[80]

In acknowledging the feasibility in principle of a history of the Merovingian period, Thierry also recognized the complexity of the "disentangling" work involved in such an enterprise. But the very fact of publishing his text (as distinct from abandoning it as he did an aborted *Histoire des invasions germaniques*) carried with it the implicit promise that he had succeeded in imposing some sort of order on the "wealth of detail" available to him, in the first instance in the separate narratives that were published in the *Revue des deux mondes* in 1835 and 1836, and second, in the combined *Récits*, which were published in 1840 together with a historiographical survey entitled *Considérations sur l'histoire de France.*[81] I deliberately use the words "some sort of order" here since Thierry's preface also intimated that the published work was actually unfinished: only the first part of the entire work he was planning and, as such, more a "contribution toward" a definitive history of the Merovingian period than the thing itself. Indeed, reflecting the familiar difficulties of bringing a historical work to a close, Thierry did write a seventh narrative, which was published in the *Revue des deux mondes* in 1841 and included in many subsequent editions of the *Récits;* but there the writing stopped.

How was he to represent historiographically a turbulent period with no obvious central subject about whom a continuous narrative could be constructed? As the "récits" in his title indicates, Thierry's compositional strategy was centered on his renunciation of the attempt to produce a continuous narrative or unitary text that would exhaust his topic. There are grounds for supposing that his awareness of the basic representability of the Merovingian period was facilitated by his enthusiasm for Chateaubriand's *Les martyrs* (1809) and by the general romantic enthusiasm for popular storytelling, in particular, the model of folk epic. Charles Rearick has argued that Thierry was influenced, through Claude Fauriel, by the *cantilène* theory of

epic based on the idea that Homeric and other epics were not the original work of one poet but rather the result of a poet's weaving together many different songs originating in popular culture.[82] Thierry does not explicitly refer to epic in the preface to the *Récits,* but some such *composite* textual model would seem to have informed his belief that the Merovingian period was representable after all. Thus he described his principal source, the work of Gregory of Tours, as a mishmash of fascinating tableaux, from which he (as poet) could produce something unified:

> [The work of Gregory of Tours] is like a badly organized gallery of paintings and reliefs; it is made up of old national songs that have been truncated and disseminated at random (*de vieux chants nationaux, écourtés, semés sans liaison*) but that could be organized into a whole to form a poem, if that fashionable word can be applied to history.[83]

Reflecting this belief in the functionality of a composite discourse, Thierry's reworking of his sources takes the form of multiple stories. These are "fragments of history," as he calls them, that are nevertheless designed to make a "unified impression" on the reader. In accepting "fragments" as a legitimate discursive form, Thierry reveals his debt to a romantic aesthetics that valued open, looser forms, as I mentioned earlier, and to the contemporary interest in collections and museum displays as alternative forms of history.[84] Against this background, there was room for Thierry to hope that "a badly organized gallery" could become a "poem" of sorts.

The six stories making up the 1840 edition run partly consecutively, partly concurrently and are loosely linked by recurring figures and thematic parallels. As Lionel Gossman has shown in his detailed commentary on the *Récits,* the various narratives are linked paradigmatically as repeated variations on the same themes, chief among them the struggle between Frankish lawlessness and Gallo-Roman justice. As he had done in the *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre* (1825), then, Thierry used the "point of view" of racial opposition in order to organize his material; in this case, however, this organization involved a repeating series of smaller-scale conflicts more than a single overarching development.[85] Echoing the pattern of broken vows and injustice in the earlier episodes, for example, the fifth and sixth narratives are focused on the figure of the Gallo-Roman Leudast, who from humble origins rose to power, but then fell victim to Frankish violence and vengefulness:

> If in itself the name of Leudast, barely mentioned in the histories of France, was scarcely worthy of being rescued from oblivion, his life, since it is intimately mixed up with that of many famous persons, presents one of the most

> characteristic episodes in the general life of that century. . . . How could an individual who was Gaulish and from a servile background manage to make a fortune under Frankish rule? [86]

While Thierry's use of minihistories was a compositional repercussion of his particular interest in the Merovingian period, it was also linked to his desire to treat that period in such a way as to give a sense of its culture, "the general life of that century." But the total history of Merovingian times was "impossible to write in its entirety," he wrote: if details illuminating cultural phenomena are included along with the political history of the period, they will "impede at every step the progress of the narrative" and will make for a work "of colossal dimensions."[87] Rather than be colossal and still incomplete like Le Grand, therefore, Thierry chose to work on the basis of exemplification. In this he followed, as Marcel Gauchet puts it, the new "semiotic regime" that had been helped into being by the historical novel, and that consisted of renouncing the aim of being exhaustive in favor of exemplifying large-scale phenomena through the judicious selection of representative incidents and individuals. Thierry, it will be recalled, openly admired Scott for having brought out the "poetic" qualities of the history of England and Scotland, and many of the narrativizing strategies analyzed in Chapter 1 are also applicable to the historian's work.

Just as Scott's *Ivanhoe* had concentrated on the period of King Richard's return to England to represent the struggle between Saxon and Norman cultures, so too did the *Récits* concentrate its account of the struggle between the Franks and the Romanized Gauls on a shorter period of time: the second half of the sixth century, which according to Thierry's preface was "the culminating point of the first stage in the mixing of two cultures."[88] Like Scott, though without recourse to imaginary characters, Thierry also focused on a limited number of individuals whose lives act as a *fil conducteur* for the individual narratives at the same time as they offer insight into the period as a whole (among them, the above mentioned Leudast, Chilperic, Fredegund, and Gregory of Tours). These figures become lodestones around which information regarding the culture and cultural struggles of the period falls into place; they are, as Thierry put it in a Balzacian turn of phrase, "types for their century [*des types pour leur siècle*]."[89] As important, the focus on individuals also provides the possibility for empathy with fellow humans, for that "biographical interest" which Thierry and his contemporaries saw as central to historical understanding.[90]

Thierry's basic strategy for narrativizing events can be illustrated by the first "story," which opens with the description of a setting: Clother's royal residence in Braine.[91] An initial generic description of this residence as an instance of a particular type ("It was . . . one of those immense farms in

which the Franks used to hold court") is followed by an account of its particular layout. In a sequence that moves from center to periphery in both social and spatial terms, mention is made first of the central building, then of the adjacent buildings occupied by important officials, the outhouses occupied by different artisans, and finally, the farm laborers' cabins along the edges of the wood. The discourse then switches to Clother, the master of the whole complex, beginning with an account of the sort of activities he carried out in this palace, and moving from there to an account of his activities in general and his dealings with women in particular; this topic then introduces the first narrative statement in the story: what his wife, Indegonde, said to him on a particular day.

In reducing the scale of his subject in this way, Thierry provided himself with a figurative focus in each narrative and allowed himself to enter into greater detail regarding customs and beliefs: as in Scott's novels, the focus on a select number of actors renders relevant the description of different aspects of their lives, from the disposition of their houses to their manner of baptizing their children and marrying their wives. Such details are pertinent within the framework of the story of Galeswinthe and Fredegund in a way they would not be within the framework of a larger-scale narrative aiming to describe the political changes taking place within society at large over a whole period. Conversely, the descriptions relating to the lives and actions of individual characters are also used as a means of giving information about phenomena that are characteristic for a particular social class or period.

If Thierry thus succeeds in integrating general information about Merovingian mores into his narratives of particular events, it cannot be said that this typification process always takes place without a hitch. To begin with, he has to elaborate on his principal source in order to fill in the motives and reasonings of the individuals whose lives he is describing, peppering the narrative with modalizing "perhapses" to mark the point where certainty has had to give way to speculation.[92] Even more important for the purposes of the present argument, Thierry has occasional recourse to a controlled form of invention. In his account of the marriage between Chilperic and Galeswinthe, for example, he explains the custom of the *morgane-ghiba,* the gift that the groom gives to the bride on the morning after the nuptial night, but he is unable to follow this up in the narrative with a quotation of the precise words Chilperic spoke to Galeswinthe on the morning after. Although there are sources available relating to the customary words spoken on other such occasions, there are no sources relating to this particular *morgane-ghiba:* the record is, and will presumably always be, silent on this point. The focus on particular events, which forms the organizing principle of the narrative, is not abandoned, however, because of this informa-

tional gap. Neither is the reference to the speech. Instead, Thierry projects on the basis of his certain knowledge of other speeches a *hypothetical* speech—identified as such in advance— which is nevertheless quoted verbatim as if it had actually taken place: "I, Chilperic, king of the Franks, illustrious man, to you Galeswinthe, my beloved wife, to whom I am bound in wedlock according to the Salic law by the solidus and the denarius, I give today of the tenderness of my love, as a dowry and a morning gift, the cities of Bordeaux, Cahors."[93]

In order to maintain the focus on the particular marriage of Galeswinthe and Chilperic and impart the information he has from other sources regarding marriage customs in general, Thierry extrapolates from his material, "transferring" information regarding one situation to another. This is a strategy we have already encountered in a different form in Scott's transfer of properties between historical and fictitious characters. But where the novelist transfers information at will and without acknowledgment in the text, Thierry does so openly and circumspectly—at least up to a point (Smithson's analysis suggests that he did not disclose every deviation from his principal source).[94] In putting invented words into the mouth of Chilperic, he fell back in effect on the older convention that allowed for invented dialogue in historiographical texts.[95] But even then, his invention does not really qualify as an invitation to make-believe ("imagine they were to have done this..."); it is rather a reasoned and unresolvable hypothesis about some actual, but no longer knowable, event ("this is probably what did happen").[96] As such, it recalls the speculative character of some passages in Natalie Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* more than the uniform assertiveness of Scott's fiction.

The more general theoretical point to be made here is that historical representation may not only be fuzzily imperfect and yet functional to a degree (the point made about Monteil) but also involve compromises. These are not just a feature of historical fiction. The chosen model for representing a particular aspect of the past may bring the historian quite a way in organizing information into an argument, but it may not go the whole way. A central argument is recognizable in Thierry's *Récits* (in this sense, he has overcome fuzziness), but it cannot be said that every aspect of the past presented in these "fragments of history" is subordinated to it. Moreover, the clarity of that argument is occasionally won at the cost of the literal accuracy of some items of information. Swings and roundabouts: what is gained in coherence may be partly lost in the perceived correspondence to the period; what is lost in coherence may be gained in iconic fidelity. What priorities is one to set?

That Thierry managed to strike at least a temporary balance between coherence and correspondence in the *Récits* is indicated in the generally posi-

tive contemporary reception of this work and its popularity up until at least the end of the century (there were eleven editions between 1840 and 1888). In his speech to the Academy on the occasion of Thierry's being first awarded the Prix Gobert, François Villemain explained that the Academy had chosen the *Récits* as a work combining artfulness and erudition, successful in avoiding the pitfalls of incompleteness and prolixity; they had not wanted "a work that was on a scale too vast to be fully elaborated, some immense and incomplete monument, valuable for research but imperfect as art (*insuffisant pour l'art*)."[97] As with the work of Scott, however, the value accorded Thierry's writing, while it was linked to its artfulness, was also related to the future histories it promised and the actual work it stimulated. As Robert Flint wrote in 1894, the *Récits* "gave to ages which had previously seemed the dullest and dreariest imaginable an interest which has stimulated to [*sic*] various fruitful researches, and which has not yet passed away."[98]

Fiction: Jules Michelet's Witch (1862)

Michelet's *La sorcière* (1862) resembles Monteil's work in being devoted exclusively to cultural phenomena over a long period of time. But where Monteil had tried to write a large-scale history of all aspects of culture, Michelet chose a much more narrowly defined topic that he treated in a mere three hundred pages: popular beliefs in magic and witchcraft. This was a topic that enjoyed considerable popularity among his contemporaries, witness the widespread interest in folk culture and the production of literary works (by Charles Nodier and Barbey d'Aurevilly, for example) exploring experiences of bewitchment.[99] The issue had also been raised in a number of nonfictional works that dealt from a historical perspective with such related topics as magic, sorcery, witchcraft: Scott's *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830), Thomas Wright's *Narratives of Sorcery and Magic* (1851), and Louis Figuier's *Histoire du merveilleux dans les temps modernes* (1860), to name just a few. Michelet's particular concern was with sketching out a history of beliefs and practices relating to witchcraft, beginning with the role of witchcraft and its representations in popular culture, and then moving to its subsequent emergence in disfigured form in convent culture, its suppression by the church, and its long-term influence on more beneficial technological developments.

A composite discourse, *La sorcière* is divided into two books, distinguished both in subject matter and in style. Book 2, after an introductory discussion of the effect of church suppression on popular beliefs, concentrates on four trials for sorcery, principally involving nuns and their con-

fessors, that took place in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Case studies had already been a preferred option in earlier attempts to write a history of witchcraft, notably in the works by Scott and Wright, which are mentioned among Michelet's principal sources.[100] But where these earlier texts involve loose collections of individual stories about different locations, Michelet's cases follow each other chronologically, exemplifying the changing status of witchcraft in France up to the eighteenth century. In light of what was said above about the revision of earlier histories, it is interesting to note that four chapters of book 2 (around a third of the total) were extracted unchanged from volumes 11–13 (1857–60) of Michelet's own *Histoire de France*, recycled as it were within his own oeuvre.[101]

Preceding these well-documented case studies, book 1 deals with the "prehistory" of witchcraft as a juridico-cultural phenomenon and with popular beliefs in witchcraft, picking up on a number of recently published works on these issues. But in order to treat these topics discursively, Michelet engaged in a bit of *bricolage* with the model of biography. Since his material did not provide him with a historical figure like Leudast or Fredegund whose biography could exemplify the history he wanted to treat, he openly resorted to the fiction of an idealtypical "witch." Just as Barante, Thierry, and others had used the allegorical figure of Jacques Bonhomme in order to narrate the history of the French nation from Gaulish times *as if* it were the life of a single man, so too did Michelet use the figure of "the witch" to narrate the history of witchcraft over a number of centuries as if it were a biography of a particular woman. Expressing once again the fear of long books, Michelet justified this strategy by the need to avoid prolixity:

> To avoid getting bogged down in this lengthy historical and moral analysis of the creation of the Witch up to 1300, I have often followed a narrow biographical and dramatical thread, the life of the same woman across a period of three hundred years.[102]

With the help of this biographical "thread," the fragmentary and diverse material relating to popular culture that Michelet was dealing with in the first half of the work is integrated into the account of scenes typical for "her" life. The discourse is organized both systematically and narratively: while each chapter deals with a different aspect of the "witch" as an imagined figure, together they suggest a progression in her role from mediator between the living and the dead and healer of woes to satanic opponent of clerical repression. The recurrent reference to a nominally constant, grammatically singular figure called "la femme" or "elle" thus provides a fixed

background against which varieties and changes in attitude and behavior over hundreds of years are measured. Just as *Old Mortality* ended with the happy-ever-after of Morton's marriage, so it is with the account of "her" disappearance astride Satan's horse that Michelet's book ends:

> To be forever lonely. To be forever unloved! What was left to her? Nothing but the Spirit that was slinking away just now.
>
> "Very well, my dear Satan, let's go.... For I'm in a hurry to be down below. Hell is better. Farewell, this world!"...
>
> All eyes followed her.... Terrified, the honest folks cried out, "O, what is to become of her?"—As she left, she laughed, the most terrible cackle of laughter, and then disappeared like an arrow.—One would like to know, but one can never know, what became of her.[103]

As this passage illustrates, the focus on a single woman involves the incorporation of details regarding both her thoughts and the attitudes of those looking at her. In a complicated play of perspectives, "the witch" is presented as an image (as others believe her to be), as an object (as others accordingly treat her), and as a subject (what it feels like to be driven toward the practice of black magic or what it feels like to be outcast). At times this play of perspectives becomes ambiguous, and the reader has difficulty distinguishing mental projection from objectively occurring event. While this can be seen as an element of fuzziness in the account, it too should be judged relative to the difficulties inherent in Michelet's project. Once again, it is a matter of swings and roundabouts. The ambiguity in the perspective is in part a by-product of the historian's attempt to represent, on the basis of unreliable evidence, something that is ontologically extremely complex: the troubled interaction between beliefs and actions, between subjectivity and objectivity, in the evolution of "the witch."

One of the formal means used by Michelet to give expression to this complexity is the technique of "free indirect discourse," a technique for representing consciousness that played an increasingly important role in the nineteenth-century novel (most notoriously in Flaubert's portrayal of the consciousness of his central female character in *Madame Bovary* [1857]), and that has sometimes been taken as the hallmark of fictional as distinct from factual communication.[104] Without any quotation marks to distinguish the words of the character from that of the narrator, free indirect discourse mixes the past-tense words of a narrator ("narrator text") with the words a character has putatively uttered to him- or herself ("character text") so that, within the framework of a retrospective narrative, an illusion is momentarily created that the reader can think along with the character. "To be

forever unloved! What was left to her?" Through such phrases, Michelet represents occurrences as if they were being experienced from the point of view of an illiterate participant rather than from that of the retrospective historian (the latter remains nevertheless present in the third-person, past-tense form of the utterance as a whole). This use of free indirect discourse to put beliefs "in perspective" by allowing us to see along with both the witch and the historian distinguishes *La sorcière* from, for example, Charles Louandre's *La sorcellerie* (1853), an account of popular beliefs that Michelet used extensively though without any acknowledgment: Louandre also attempted to offer an internal perspective on popular beliefs, but did so by simply describing items of belief as objective occurrences.[105]

Michelet has open recourse to a fictitious figure and invites the reader to play along with the fiction that she existed and with the further fiction that he, as narrator, has access to her consciousness. Fiction thus allows him to narrativize his treatment of popular culture—to give it a beginning (the woman is born), middle (the transformation of witchcraft), and an end ("As she left, she laughed, the most terrible cackle of laughter, and then disappeared like an arrow")—and to personalize it to a degree by allowing a focus on a quasi-individual and her subjectivity. Where Thierry presented Chilperic's fictional speech as in all likelihood an exact replica of a lost original, there is no possible—single—equivalent to Michelet's lady. Although "she" is grammatically singular, it is understood, from the unabashed reference to her impossible longevity, that the name may correspond in different contexts to various individuals and that the thoughts ascribed to her are ultimately the thoughts of the historian who has had to imagine, with the help of limited, often folkloric, or even fictional evidence, what it must have been like to be a woman or peasant in those circumstances.[106] This life of the witch as a figure in popular culture thus *approximates* to a biography without ever literally being one.

But this use of fiction and approximation can be seen as the price Michelet pays to overcome silence and make popular beliefs concerning witchcraft representable as the subject of a discourse. Ultimately, as Michelet himself wrote of his witch, there are simply limits to what can be known, and hence what can be said historiographically about popular beliefs: "One would like to know, but one can never know, what became of her." In the manner of a metaphor the figure of the witch is presented to the reader for the purposes of discussion *as if* it were an individual to whom others react, and of whom a biography can be written.[107] As important, book 1 functions as a heuristic device with respect to book 2, by offering an interpretive framework that serves to highlight the common exemplification of the erosion and transformation of popular beliefs within the Catholic

church in the different cases studied. The fiction thus forms as it were a "permanent scaffold" around the documented history of witchcraft, holding different cases together as episodes in a common development.[108]

Wouter Kusters shows in his survey of the initial reception of *La sorcière* how the book gave rise to a storm of criticism. Both in private responses and in formal reviews, it was attacked because of its interpretation of the role of the church and/or for the extent to which the imagination was used in treating matters sexual and physical. The problem seems to have been not the use of fiction as such but the particular uses to which it was put, the substance and not the fact of the invention.[109] One of the most positive commentaries came in L. T. May's preface to the English translation (1863), where the work was praised as a mixture of "sober history" and "beautiful speculation," of history and romance, of realism and "touching poetry," which may be read for both pleasure and profit. The same commentary concluded, however, with the recognition that, for all these merits, *La sorcière* was destined to be superseded by some other history: "But the true history of witchcraft has yet to be written by some cooler hand."[110]

The idea that Michelet's partly fictional work is a prelude to some other history has reemerged in more recent reevaluations of the work. Thus Lionel Gossman concludes his important study of Michelet by recognizing the author of *La sorcière* as a forefather of the twentieth-century *nouvelle histoire.* Again, the value of *La sorcière* is linked not to the history it offers but rather to the perspective it opens on a history that someone else could write.

> Thanks to [Michelet] and to his wild imagination, we now know that alongside or beneath political history, diplomatic history, military history, the history of kings and states and assemblies, there is also an alimentary history and a demographic history, a history of sexual practices, a history of the family, a history of cultural representations or *mentalités.*[111]

As we have seen in this chapter, Michelet was by no means the first writer to want to go beyond "the history of kings" to such subjects as the history of food, demography, the family, and so on (it is interesting to notice how the topics pile up in Gossman's sentence as they did in Monteil's treatise on "nonbattle" history). Nor was Michelet even the first writer to try a history of witchcraft. Gossman's recognition of Michelet as the inventor of an alternative, "nonbattle" history may have to be explained, therefore, by the latter's success in treating his topic in a way that was so vivid, so coherent (albeit held up by a fictional scaffolding) that it spoke to later historians. Michelet's contribution, in other words, was not just in naming these alternative histories (though this is how it may seem after the fact) but in treating at least one of them in such a way that it seemed "representable"

and hence the potential object of future exploration. The topic emerged as it were for others *after* it had been written about by Michelet.

The more general conclusion to be drawn from this is that the representability of an aspect of the past is not something given, but something constructed through bricolage, fiction, emulation, and revision. Even such an apparently original work as Michelet's is the product of earlier writings, and its publicly acknowledged value lies paradoxically in the fact that, even as it is appreciated for its insights into witchcraft as a cultural phenomenon, it is also held up as the promise of some other text—an imminence that we have already seen in the case of Scott's historical fiction. The value of historical works *as* historical works would seem to lie too in the fact that they point beyond themselves, not only to the historical reality they represent, but also to a future, less imperfect history (which of course might never be realized). According to Jakobson, Mukařovský and others, literarity lies rather in the fact that readers are constantly drawn back to the original text: the textual artifact becomes valued aesthetically in itself because it seems to resist reduction to a single 'take-away' interpretation that would make the original expendable.[112] As Gossman's comments indicate, it is the particular qualities of Michelet's composition that keep inviting readers to reread him (the same is arguably also the case with Thierry's history).[113] In this sense, his work has acquired literary value and continues to be read "for its own sake." But my argument here suggests that if it continues to be read for its own sake, this has to do with the fact that its imaginative and rhetorical power serves to evoke an alternative history that is probably beyond the reach of investigation. In Chapter 4, I shall come back to this complex interaction between literarity and alternative histories.

The Historicity of Histories

It should be clear by now that a discursive will does not always mean that there is automatically a way. In discussing the work of Scott as *historical* fiction, I argued that a representation can be taken seriously although recognized as defective in some respects. The historiographical examples presented here support the idea that imperfection is a congenital feature of historical writing, because of the chronic tendency to digress, because of insufficient information, because of fuzziness in the definition of the topic, or because of the scarcity of discursive forms. Michel Foucault's scarcity principle, which I already used to explain the value accorded to Scott's fiction, seems applicable here as well. A historian wanting to address a new topic has to creatively adapt existing discursive models, if need be using them only "approximately," if need be supplementing evidence with specu-

lation or even fiction. What distinguishes historiography in this regard from other forms of historical representation is not so much the occurrence of compromises as the collective imperative to keep seeking them out and to keep trying to provide alternatives.

More recent practice indicates that bricolage with available forms was not just a feature of preprofessional history writing but is an inherent part of ongoing historiographical practice. The five volumes of the collective *Histoire des femmes en Occident* (1991–92), for example, are each devoted to a conventionally defined period from the ancient world through the Middle Ages to early modern and modern times—an editorial design that implies that such divisions are pertinent to the history of women and that there is roughly the same amount to be said about each of them. In the general preface, editors Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot admit that this organization of the material may be symptomatic of a certain weakness in their history, a possible divergence between practical considerations (the desire to produce a readable and not too lengthy discourse) and scholarly imperatives (the desire to produce an argument about a particular aspect of the past): "Each volume in the series corresponds to one of the usual periods.... This was a convenient choice for us, and the only practical choice, but does it yield a useful conceptual framework?"[114] The uncertainty evinced here reflects not only an awareness of the multiple demands made of the historian-as-writer, but also an additional awareness of the fact that, since these demands may be at odds with each other, the historian may have to settle for something less than perfect or make the most of what s/he has. Ideally, the editors imply, they should not have to fall back on preconceived categories that may not be appropriate to their subject, but then there would not have been any *Histoire des femmes* in the short term. Again it is clear that a history dealing with a largely unexplored area of the past cannot begin completely from scratch and may not immediately be—or even aim to be—"perfect" or fully coherent history. As Duby and Perrot put it, "We seek not to draw conclusions but to raise questions."[115]

The representability of a particular aspect of the past has its own history. It is not given once and for all as a property of events, but is constituted over time according to the changing interests of historians, the expansion of research facilities, the development of new discursive forms and techniques of representation, and changing notions of what makes an intelligible and usable work of history. The evidence presented here suggests that the treatment of new topics is generally modeled on earlier discourses. The relative success of one writer in making a hitherto silent aspect of the past "speak" to the latter-day public can be measured among other things in the way one text provides a model for another. To begin with, intertextuality is observable in the evolution of topics, some works apparently generating

paradigms that are followed or refined by others. Thus a (novelistic) history of the conquest of England leads to a history of the conquest of France, to recall Thierry's work; a general history of everyday culture leads to a more narrowly defined history of agriculture or finance, to recall Monteil's work; or to take a number of more recent examples, a history of smell leads to a history of sight or the senses in general, a history of childhood can stimulate a history of adolescence and old age, and so on.[116] Second, intertextuality is evident in the way existing discursive models are applied to new topics and, if need be, adapted. Thus Michelet adopted and adapted the biographical model in order to represent a cultural phenomenon in *La sorcière;* or, to take some of the examples Philippe Carrard discusses in his *Poetics of the New History*, a three- or four-part "stage narrative" has often been recycled among "new historians," as has the division of information à la Braudel according to different temporal dimensions.[117] While earlier histories inevitably play a crucial role in the evolution of historiographical forms, my examples here indicate the fact that historians also look to other cultural domains, including that of the novel. That the influence of the novel is not restricted to the romantic period is suggested by Lawrence Stone's passing remark to the effect that recent historians have been influenced by the modern novel and "tell their stories in a different way from that of Homer, or Dickens, or Balzac."[118] This influence can be directly seen in Erich Auerbach's literary history *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946), where Virginia Woolf is invoked as a model: if he had tried to write a complete account of Western literature since Homer, Auerbach confessed, he would have been "swamped by his materials," and his argument would have been "completely buried under a mass of factual information"; luckily the modernist experiments of writers like Virginia Woolf had shown that a historian could legitimately prefer "the exploitation of random everyday events, contained within a few hours and days," to the "complete and chronological representation of a total exterior continuum."[119] While some historians have thus modeled themselves on modernist novelists, the influence of earlier fiction writers continues (when it comes to formal innovation historians may lag behind novelists). Thus Michelle Perrot invokes Balzac, Nerval, and Proust (along with Pirandello and Molière) in the preface to her contribution to the *Histoire de la vie privée* (1985–87):

> We are also left with the irreducible opacity of the object, an opacity we must somehow penetrate in order to advance beyond the social history of private life, that is, in order to write the history. . . of individuals, of their representations and emotions—a history of ways of doing, living, feeling, and loving. . . . Along with a Balzacian history of family intrigues we would like a Nervalian history of desire and a musical, Proustian history of intimacy.[120]

These creative writers act as models for Perrot presumably because their work constituted a first, and still readable, attempt to represent those aspects of nineteenth-century life that interest her but that she can no longer directly observe. Thus Perrot's reference to the *Comédie humaine* reflects the ongoing attempt to turn into a nonfictional history "proper" Balzac's (unfinished) fictional representation of nineteenth-century mores, itself an attempt to improve on Monteil's attempt to go beyond battles...

The *Histoire de la vie privée* has much in common with Monteil's history. Not only is it divided into five parts, but each part treats of a particular period in time and is organized according to different principles. Volume 1, for example, is organized chronologically (each chapter deals with a different place at a different period). Volume 4 is arranged systematically following the metaphor of a theater ("Lever de rideau," "Les acteurs," "Scènes et lieux," "Coulisses"). Apparently, the project of writing a large-scale history of (an aspect of) culture is still alive, and historians are still experimenting with ways of writing coherently about it. The fact that at least one critic of the *Histoire de la vie privée* complained of "its miscellaneousness and exasperating irrelevancies" suggests that the pattern of trial and revision, started at least as long ago as Le Grand's *Histoire de la vie privée des Français*, is set to continue.[121]

Beyond Battles (encore)

"In the past, historians could be accused of wanting to know only about 'the great deeds of kings.' But more and more, historians are turning to what their predecessors passed over in silence...." These words have a familiar ring. They were written by Carlo Ginzburg as recently as 1976, in the preface to his *The Cheese and the Worms*.[122] "Back of the movement then as now lay a belief that too much attention was being paid to wars and intrigues, to the doings of princes and diplomats, and too little to arts, sciences, economic and social life." These words too have a familiar ring and were written in 1933 by Thomas Peardon in his account of English historiography in the period 1760–1830.[123] It seems that for at least two hundred years we have been about to leave the old historiographical régime behind and move in the direction of works that would be more relevant (more "historical") than earlier histories because closer to the general experience and conditions of everyday life, and hence more democratic. Thus a succession of "new histories" have been announced, from the Enlightenment histories of culture, to romantic national histories, to the nineteenth-century social novel, to Anglo-Saxon new history, to the Annales *nouvelle histoire*... Despite differences in approach and focus, a rhetoric of an "imminent new de-

parture" seems to characterize these movements, historiographical renewal being conceived above all in terms of treating topics that have hitherto been neglected. Following this negative logic, the mere fact of addressing a hitherto marginalized aspect of the past becomes a value in itself, irrespective of what is said about that topic and even irrespective of a work's success in constructing an argument. The same logic also means that top value will be accorded to those topics in particular that seem to bring us a step closer to the most secret, the most intimate, the most neglected aspects of the past.

Even as historians have continued to announce their imminent liberation from "old history," others have been concerned with showing that contemporary historians have not been the first to go beyond battles. Donald Kelley has written in this regard of the chronic "amnesia" of historians, who foreground their own novelty by ignoring predecessors in the field.[124] (Thus a bit like Columbus surveying an uninhabited new world, Georges Duby claimed in 1985 that "the history of private life" had involved taking a perilous route across absolutely "untouched" ground[125]—to be sure, Duby's topic is somewhat different from that of Le Grand and Balzac, but "virgin" is surely an exaggeration of the putative silence surrounding the intimate history of humanity.) Fighting against this sort of amnesia, Kelley among others has been concerned to point out that the "old history" was never quite as limited in its concerns as it has subsequently been made out to be, and that incidental precursors of "new" beyond-battles history can be cited as far back as Pasquier's *Recherches de la France* and De la Popelinière's *L'histoire des histoires, avec l'idée de l'histoire accomplie,* if not to Herodotus himself.[126] One of my own concerns here has been to point out with respect to France and England that there was more than incidental interest in a "new history" in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, that an alternative history was simultaneously on the agenda in a number of cultural fields. The history of historiography has its own silences.

Why should the imminence of a new departure continue to be announced? Part of the answer must be sought in the aesthetics of opposition characteristic of the postromantic period, where innovation and originality have been considered values in themselves. Those who proclaim the novelty of their subject (particularly if it involves tracking "perilous" routes through virgin territory) can automatically expect a certain measure of goodwill. As Peter Novick has argued, moreover, working on a topic no one has apparently treated before also has the purely strategic advantage in the information age of dispensing with rivals and the need to take into account a whole series of earlier histories.[127] The explanation for this persistent sense of dissatisfaction with existing histories lies also in changing social configurations that modify the historian's perspective on the past

and feed into an interest on the part of particular groups in a "new" history that would be more relevant to their concerns (or, at least, would not still be the same "old" story). This is how I understand Carl Becker's explanation of the fact that "the history of history is a record of the 'new history' that in every age rises to confound and supplant the old."[128] But part of the answer should also be sought in the problem of representability as I have been outlining it here. To the legacy of romantic historicism belongs the idea that there is more than one story to be told about the past and the realization that there is a possible disjunction between relevance and representability; that it may in fact be impossible to write the "essential" part of history, which brings us close to the lived experience of the past. This disjunction between relevance and representability left historical writing in a particularly close relationship of emulation and rivalry with writers of fiction. As long as historians avoided the problem of representability by focusing on dramatic, narratable events deemed of national importance (or to put this another way, as long as the interpretation of political events continued for ideological and institutional reasons to upstage in practice the portrayal of everyday experience),[129] this particular historicist legacy was of marginal importance. With the current predominance of cultural history within historical studies, however, the disjunction between representability and relevance has become inevitably more of a central issue and hence more thematized in historical writing.[130]

To a certain extent, their attempts to represent the silences of the past have left historians running after novelists. As I shall show in the next chapter, however, their failures also provide the means by which they may distinguish themselves from their fancy-free associates. After all, there is nothing in a fictional world that can actually escape representation.

3

Sublimity

Thomas Carlyle and the Aesthetics of Historical Ignorance

> L'échappée n'appartient à personne, pas même à l'historien. Elle est là, intransmissible et secrète, présente et défunte.
>
> —Arlette Farge, *Le cours ordinaire des choses dans la cité du XVIIIe siècle*

> About Menocchio we know many things. About this Marcato, or Marco—and so many others like him who lived and died without leaving a trace—we know nothing.
>
> —Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

The Residue of Representation

In philosophical debates on fictionality, imaginary entities have traditionally been distinguished from real entities by virtue of their *incompleteness.* The argument runs more or less as follows. Since fictitious entities are intentional objects, imagined by a human hand in a schematic way, they are marked by "spots of indeterminacy."[1] Thus when Conan Doyle invented the character of Sherlock Holmes, he never specified the exact condition of the skin on his back (whether or not the detective had a mole on his shoulder) or indeed the exact state of his kidneys or the precise diameter of his ankles. Within the story world in which the detective figures, Holmes exists warts and all. From the "external perspective" of our world, however,

Holmes is only a "mental entity," less a man of flesh and blood than a cut-out figure with a blank for a back. And so Conan Doyle's hero will remain for eternity. Once designed with an indeterminate back, so he is destined to remain. You can never run into him in the street and turn him around to see what he looks like from behind.[2]

Questions regarding the unspecified features of imaginary entities are unanswerable, then, and not just because of our lack of information. The questions themselves seem inappropriate.[3] To the extent that imaginary entities are considered as fiction and not as real beings, they are understood as determined only in those respects that are described, implied, or alluded to in the text, or that are relevant to the story being told. (It follows from Ryan's "principle of minimal departure" that readers supplement a fiction with knowledge of the actual world, but that unless they happen to be dealing with a historical novel, they do this only within the limits demanded by the story.) Within the framework of fictional communication, then, it is illogical to say that we do not know about Sherlock Holmes's skin condition since there is simply nothing beyond Conan Doyle's text either to know or be ignorant of, and nothing in that text to make this a relevant question.

Not so with the entities that are the subject of historical writing. The world-to-be-represented in historical works is by definition real and hence *complete* from an ontological point of view. It is—or at least *was*—determined in all respects. To be sure, we can no longer turn Napoleon around to look for warts, but somebody could once have done so. The world represented in historical writing—including historical fiction—existed once in its plenitude, and now it exists both as a potential object of knowledge and as the locus of resistance to our attempts to know and understand it. The very possibility of historical knowledge thus implies the possibility of ignorance.

My discussions in earlier chapters have shown how our view of the past—the reality of the past as an object of representation—is constructed by the questions we ask, the evidence we find, and the ways we devise to make sense of it and bring it alive. In what follows, I want to turn this view of historical writing on its head by reflecting on the fact that historical representation is always limited by the very point of view that makes it possible: the flip side of selection is exclusion. From the imaginary perspective of Danto's "Ideal Chronicler,"[4] it can be seen that in the very act of constituting something as knowledge, those who write about the past wittingly or unwittingly constitute other aspects of the past as "nonhistory." Every historical work thus generates its own "residue" or what Arlette Farge, in an evocative turn of phrase, has called "l'échappée," that which has escaped. The flip side of historical knowledge is ignorance about topics not treated or the historiographical paths not taken. It is in this sense that I un-

derstand Norman Hampson's admission that "one might almost go so far as to say that all historical explanations are confessions of ignorance."[5] Or, as Michelle Perrot wrote with respect to the history of private life: "light produces darkness. The unsaid, the unknown, the unknowable . . . increase apace with the knowledge that digs vast chasms . . . beneath our feet."[6] In contrast to fictions, therefore, all historical works (again including historical novels) have a ramifying *hors-texte* made up of all those phenomena that have escaped the representation. If historical inquiry is premised on the real existence of an object of knowledge beyond the persons doing the inquiring, it also springs from the sense that existing representations are incomplete and that there is more to be known and said on the matter.

The residue may come to haunt writers after publication, in the form of postscripts and addenda and revised versions—hence the additions to Scott's novels that I described in Chapter 1. It may come back to taunt historians even as they are writing and bog them down in a ramifying quagmire of irrelevant information—hence the fear of long books that I described in Chapter 2. But in all cases, the residue is attendant in theory upon the writing and the reading of history. It may not always be perceived as such, and if perceived it may not be considered significant: readers may be so appreciative of the account they are dealing with that they do not dwell on its limitations. Even if they know that in principle it is limited, they may be satisfied for the nonce that it is a welcome improvement on the alternatives. In other cases, however, the awareness that "something has been left out" may impinge negatively on the reader's assessment. As I mentioned earlier when discussing Scott, representation involves establishing a meaningful relationship between the limited amount of information that is presented in a text and the past as it actually was. Those dealing with the representation may accept the account as the best conceivable version of the past, but they may also be disturbed by the sense that "the whole story" has not been told about a particular topic (due account has not been taken of other sources of information or other perspectives on the same events, connections that could have been made between certain phenomena have been ignored, and so on). Alternatively, the critical reader may be convinced that other topics entirely should have been given priority since they have more relevance for the latter-day public and that research should be initiated into aspects of the past that the present history has neglected. But whatever the grounds for complaint, the critical reader can be said to turn the text around to look at it from behind: s/he points to what is already known by others and has now been ignored by the writer, or to areas of the past that have not yet been investigated. In pointing out such lacunae the ramifying or resisting critic must have an inkling, if no more than that, of how they might be filled in. To the extent that the writing of history is a

communal project and not just a matter of individual historians, then, particular representations will be vulnerable to supplementation or challenge from other points of view, even rejection as "misrepresentations," to recall the words of M'Crie.

"The unsaid, the unknown, the unknowable": these increase along with whatever knowledge we produce. As Perrot's words suggest, it is not only critical readers who are interested in the historical residue. In advance of their readers, writers may also thematize in one way or another the limits of their own representations of the past. In Chapter 2 we have seen a number of writers stress with greater or less emphasis the gap between what they have been able to discover and everything that happened or, more generally, the gap between what they are able to represent in discourse and the past as a whole. My own theoretical and historical awareness of imperfection as a structural feature of historical writing has been facilitated by the fact that many contemporary historians are overtly fascinated precisely by what escapes them—by whatever is "absent" in existing histories.[7] Thus cultural historians like Perrot, Farge, and Ginzburg have been thematizing in their work the limits to the knowability of their topics; indeed, their topics seem chosen in part precisely because they are located on the outer reaches of what has been recorded. Alain Corbin made this preference explicit in his *Le monde retrouvé de Louis-François Pinagot: Sur les traces d'un inconnu (1798–1876)* (1998), which he calls a "meditation on disappearance" (*cette méditation sur la disparition*) since the subject was chosen precisely because there was little more known about this Pinagot than that he existed. (Echoing Scott who used his work to bring the obscure Helen Walker into the communal memory, Corbin also presents this work as an act of piety whereby the memory of this unknown peasant is restored: he aims to "recreate him" and to "give him a second chance . . . to be remembered as part of his age.")[8]

These contemporary meditations on the *échappée* of history echo with the project to "make the silences of history speak," which I sketched in the earlier chapters, and in many ways they can be seen as a late manifestation of romantic historicism. At the same time, they also echo with contemporary theoretical reflections on the limits of representability, as articulated by Jean-François Lyotard in particular in his account of the postmodern "condition." Picking up on Kant's theory of the sublime, Lyotard characterizes postmodernism as an awareness of the limits of our ability to represent the real as a totality—"We have an Idea of the world (the totality of what is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it"—coupled to a willingness to explore instead ways of talking about or of exemplifying this very unrepresentability.[9] My own discussion of "representability" with respect to earlier attempts to "make the silences of history speak" has clearly been fed by this postmodern interest in the negative sides of knowledge.

Much of the recent debate regarding representability has implicitly or explicitly revolved around the Holocaust, the event that defies the categories we have for understanding and talking about reality. It forces us to continuously probe "the limits of representation" and stimulates us to see traumatic experience as paradigmatic for our relationship with the past.[10] Gabrielle Spiegel has indeed argued that the current awareness among historians of our relative inability to represent the past is itself one of the ongoing effects of the Holocaust, in the sense that the latter enforces a more general awareness of the intractable "alterity" of the past and the limits of language.[11]

In the light of the current awareness of (un)representability as an endemic issue in historical writing, the question arises to what extent writers in earlier periods conceptualized the *échappée* and what strategies they adopted to come to terms with it. It is in the light of this concern that I want to reexamine here the work of Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881). Working in the decades following the rupture of the French Revolution and against the background of other reflections on representation and the sublime, Carlyle seems to have been particularly preoccupied with charting the different boundaries of his own historical writing. In his theoretical essays, in prefaces, and in the very body of his narratives, he repeatedly highlighted those elements that resist his efforts as historian to apprehend them. The result is a historiography in a negative key, his presentation of what a historian could and should do being constantly silhouetted against what for better or for worse has been left out.[12] Where Carlyle's work has received attention from later historiographers and theorists of history, the focus has been largely on his presumedly naïve identification of history with "biography" and his advocacy of hero worship.[13] What has received less attention is the fact that in discussing the centrality of the biographical dimension in history, he laid as much emphasis on its *limitations* as on its possibilities:

> Social Life is the aggregate of all the individual men's Lives who constitute society; History is the essence of innumerable Biographies. But if one Biography, nay our own Biography, study and recapitulate it as we may, remains in so many points unintelligible to us; how much more must these million, the very facts of which, to say nothing of the purport of them, we know not, and cannot know![14]

"Innumerable," "unintelligible," "unknown," "unknowable": the negatives pile up quickly, exemplifying that rhetoric of excess so typical of Carlyle's writing and which is symptomatic of the strain he put on language to represent a world *hors-texte*. In what follows here, I want to focus precisely on such negatives as a means to understanding how Carlyle considered his

role as a historian. In what ways did he define the boundaries of historical writing, and how did he come to terms with what escapes him? What light is cast by his historical theory and practice on current practices and debates?

It is worth noting at the outset that Carlyle had not much time for Scott. To be sure, he did praise the novelist for showing that the past was full of "living men" with which readers could empathize: through the detailed narration of characters and scenes, Scott had shown that the "embodiment" of the past as a historiographical style could and should replace the much more abstract "philosophy teaching by experience."[15] But having said that, Carlyle also criticized Scott for the robust facility with which he produced novel after novel, comparing his work to a Turkish bath that gave his readers in "total idleness . . . the delights of activity."[16] It was all too smooth and easy, Carlyle complained, clearly preferring cold showers to warm baths, and implying that one of the marks of truly great writing was the noticeable difficulty with which it was produced. As we shall see, his own theoretical approach was premised on the merits of struggling with adversity.

Carlyle's theoretical comments on historical writing are silhouetted against three adversaries in particular that make our relationship to the past both fascinating and troublesome: the boundlessness of the past, its inaccessibility, and its unintelligibility.

Boundlessness

History is an "essence" to be distilled from "innumerable" biographies? In its stress on plurality, Carlyle's definition of history reflects a tension between the idea of a homogeneous, singular "History" and the realization that empirical reality is made up of manifold particular histories—a congenital tension that was aggravated at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the light of emerging nationalisms and, what was particularly important for Carlyle, in the light of recent antiquarian research. Identifying the territory of the historian with the totality of human experience in time, Carlyle argued against limiting history to the field of politics or to the experiences of those in power, and instead proposed the inclusion of innumerable new domains as legitimate areas of study. Anticipating Paul Veyne's description of the field of events as an ever-expanding network, Carlyle conceived of the object of the historian's research as a multidimensional field, infinite in all directions, presenting it as a "labyrinth and chaos,"[17] as a "broad deep Immensity," as an "unfathomable," "boundless," and "ever-living, everworking Chaos of Being," in which "every single event is the off-spring of all other events."[18] Excluding nothing from his-

tory, then, he envisaged a total historicization of experience, embracing all classes of society and all aspects of human life, from religion and medicine to commerce and the chivalric ethos. As he enthusiastically acknowledged at the end of his essay "On History" (1830), a good start had already been made by eighteenth-century antiquarians (Beckmann's history of inventions and Goguet's history of laws came in for special mention).[19]

In recognizing the "boundless" character of the historical field, Carlyle effectively pointed to the impossibility of any single history's ever fully encompassing History as a whole or any historian's ever mastering so many different specialisms. Since the limits of the historical world are unknown, the number of possible topics is endless: by "running path after path, through the Impassable, in manifold directions and intersections," historians may collectively provide the public with "some oversight of the Whole." But, as he apprehensively recognized, more might be lost by this expansion than gained, if at the end of the day specialization should mean that "we lose all command over the whole, and the hope of any Philosophy of History be farther off than ever"—a prescient observation in the light of recent analyses of the fragmentation of the historical discipline (the "more-is-less principle") and recent attempts to reconceptualize the nature of representativity in face of the patent difficulties involved in writing a synthetic universal history.[20]

Given the limitless nature of the field of history, on the one hand, and the necessarily partial nature of any particular history, on the other, Carlyle defined "great" historians as those writers capable of selecting and treating their topics in such a way that the reader is given a sense of history as a totality, albeit an unfathomable one. Even while historians work on a small-scale topic, they maintain the dignity of their calling—and presumably avoid triviality—when they indicate that their ultimate concern is with a much broader, if not indeed limitless, phenomenon. Particularly in his early essays, he seems to have been keenly aware of the problematic nature of the relationship between part and whole in history, between the single biography and the "essence" of History or, to use more modern terms, between the "microhistory" and the master narrative.[21] Although he did not elaborate on his proposed solution, it is clear that he did not hold a synecdochic belief in the capacity of a part to stand for the whole, on the principle that if you know it, you know the rest. Rather, he stressed the importance of "an *Idea* of the Whole" informing the study of a single part or, what this seems to mean in practice, the sense that the matter is "inexhaustible."[22] Evoking the inexhaustibility of "the Whole" reflects the interwoven nature of all human experience even if only to show how little we know—a negative form of synthesis that seems close to Lyotard's discussion of the sublime. It is worth noting that Carlyle used the term "artist" to distinguish

those true historians who invoke the "Idea of the Whole" from those "artisans" who are content merely to plow their specialist furrow and are incapable of thinking beyond it. This suggests that the historiography he envisaged has both a cognitive and an aesthetic dimension. The former involves giving insight into some aspect of the past, the latter a self-reflexive dwelling on historical representation itself and on the whole act of engaging with a past of almost unimaginable complexity which resists our attempts to represent it.

Inaccessibility

In an essay entitled "On Biography" (1832), Carlyle reflected on Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion in England* (1704–7). More specifically, he highlighted the latter's account of Charles II's escape after the Battle of Worcester: the king with a couple of retainers came to the cottage of a poor Catholic who led them to a little barn full of hay and gave them a pot of buttermilk, a shirt, and "an old pair of shoes" before showing them on their way again next day. Having summarized the incident as related by Clarendon in a couple of lines, Carlyle makes the following comment:

> This, then, was a genuine flesh-and-blood Rustic of the year 1651; he did actually swallow bread and buttermilk (not having ale and bacon) and do field-labour; with these hobnailed "shoes" has sprawled through mud-roads in winter, and, jocund or not, driven his team a-field in summer: he made bargains; had chafferings and higglings, now a sore heart, now a glad one; was born; was a son, was a father; toiled in many ways, being forced to it, till the strength was all worn out of him; and then—lay down "to rest his galled back" and sleep there till the long-distant morning!—How comes it, that he alone of all the British rustics who tilled and lived along with him, on whom the blessed sun on that same "fifth of September" was shining, should have chanced to rise on us; that this poor pair of clouted Shoes, out of the million million hides that have been tanned, and cut, and worn, should still subsist, and hang visibly together? We see him but for a moment; for one moment, the blanket of the Night is rent asunder, so that we behold and see, and then closes over him—forever.[23]

A number of things are remarkable about this passage. To begin with, Carlyle declares his interest as reader in something that is only marginally or tangentially present in Clarendon's history: the nameless peasant, with his buttermilk and his shoes. Indeed, he implies that this merely-touched-upon incident may ultimately be the most interesting part of the entire narrative.

Second, the incident sparks off a whole series of speculations relating to the everyday life of this buttermilk-drinking peasant. A ramifying reader, Carlyle extends Clarendon's account by invoking a series of commonplace, ahistorical scripts about birth and death, summer and winter, family relations, and emotional ups and downs. Finally, the nameless peasant leads him to evoke the innumerable other peasants—"the million million" others—about whom we know absolutely nothing except that they probably wore shoes. Carlyle's fixation on the concrete detail of the shoes reflects an antiquarian interest in artifacts as points of access to the past. But the anecdote about a single isolated peasant and in particular about his shoes serves less to illuminate the past than, like Milton's Satan, to make the surrounding darkness visible. It indicates the existence of a vast historical residue that is not known, but that is also no longer knowable, because never recorded.[24]

Carlyle's focus here on the nameless peasant rather than on the king, and on the everyday life interrupted by war rather than the battle itself, is repeated on a number of occasions in the early essays, most explicitly in "On History" where the "nameless boor who first hammered out for himself an iron spade" is presented as being more important than the military leaders who have hitherto filled the pages of history.[25] In promoting nameless artisans and peasants above the "big names" of history, and in shifting attention from battles to culture, Carlyle's early essays reiterated one of the commonplace pieties of his period. Scott, as we have seen, was also noted for his concern with what traditional historians had left out and even with the "nameless" in history. As I showed in Chapter 2, contemporary historians like Monteil, Thierry, and Michelet were also making attempts at this time to go beyond traditional, sovereign-oriented practices in order to "make the silences of history speak." If Carlyle shared with his contemporaries the desire to go beyond the protocols of battle-based history, he was nevertheless distinguished from them by the sheer extent of his fascination with the difficulties involved in this historicist project. (Someone like Michelet, for example, was very aware of these difficulties too, but he was also confident of his own vatic powers to bridge the gap between past and present in an act of understanding.)[26] Thus Carlyle dwelled theoretically not only on the desirability of extending the domain of history, but also on the ultimate impossibility of ever being able to do so in a satisfactory way. He contemplated with "reverence," as he put it, the "dark untenanted places of the past."[27]

What were these places left without tenants? To begin with, Carlyle points to the intermittent character of the available records: if "History is the Letter of Instructions, which the old generations write and posthumously transmit to the new," it is also a letter "which comes to us in the

saddest state; falsified, blotted out, torn, lost and but a shred of it in existence."[28] No matter what the subject in question is, only a limited number of records survive the transmission process, and those records that do survive are necessarily selective, reflecting the concerns of people in the past rather than the interests of their latter-day descendants. Much as Paul Veyne described historiography as a constant struggle against the perspective imposed by the sources, Carlyle complains of one of his sources in *Past and Present* (1843) that, although it speaks with "such clear familiarity," it is "obstinately silent" on certain matters about which he himself is curious (what did someone, for example, actually look like on a particular day?).[29]

Carlyle seems to have experienced the problems endemic to the use of sources in a particularly aggravated fashion, since like many of his contemporaries he accorded particular relevance to phenomena that almost by definition went unrecorded ("sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives," as Macaulay put it).[30] Indeed, as Carlyle argued in his early essays and again in *Past and Present,* those most worthy of being recalled are the unknown individuals who had an indelible long-term influence on human culture (the inventor of the spade, for example). Since it is in the nature of the quotidian not to be remarkable enough to be written down, however, the experience that best epitomizes history as a whole, and the events that had the most long-term consequences, can never be more than tangentially known.[31] This emphasis on the *unknowability* of what is posited as being truly historical reflects the structural disjunction between relevance and representability, which I discussed earlier as part of the legacy of the historiographical project that emerged at the close of the eighteenth century. Again, Carlyle formulated this project in a radicalized form, by placing the disjunction between relevance and representability at the center of his theory of history: "The event worthiest to be known is perhaps of all others the least spoken of," he wrote, "nay, some say, it lies in the nature of such events to be so."[32] It follows from this unknowability principle that the most important historical phenomena can only incidentally be revealed, in a negative way, by anecdotes or *faits divers* in which the normally hidden routine is for some reason disrupted and hence recorded.[33] The "glimpse" becomes a methodological principle.

The way in which Carlyle presents the unknowability of everyday life paradoxically also helps sustain its relevance: the very lack of information turns the quotidian into an exotic, scarce commodity. The peasant's diet and footwear—indeed, the mere fact of his existence—are invested with a more than trivial status paradoxically because they are all we know about him. The everyday, as Maurice Blanchot puts it, by definition "escapes," and its very elusiveness turns it into the "site of all possible significance."[34]

Carlyle himself offered his peasant anecdote as an illustration of "how impressive the smallest historical *fact* may become, as contrasted with the grandest *fictitious event.*"[35] As such its symbolic power can be likened to the speaking power of a ruin, about which Everett Zimmerman writes:

> Approaching the verge of extinction, [a ruin] is particularly valuable because of the scarcity it implies: its represented life must be deciphered or lost. But however limited the decipherment that is possible, the object nevertheless retains its value as a relic, a talisman, connecting the present to the magic of the past. A ruin, a fragment, and an enigma may indeed convey a sense of the presence of the past more powerfully than more complete and completely known artifacts, because the undecipherability of their incompleteness suggests not so much communication from the past as the past itself.[36]

Carlyle's own reaction to Clarendon's peasant and his subsequent presentation of this peasant to his readers suggest that the "impressiveness" of the historical fact lies not only in its ontological status as such (though this is essential), but in the way in it is perceived as a ruin: an isolated object knowable only by chance and only against a background of vast darkness. The very paucity of information means that the imagination is activated to reflect on the background and attempt to fill it in. Van Gogh famously depicted a pair of boots and so turned them into objects of reflection about peasant life; the aesthetic aura of these seventeenth-century shoes—or so Carlyle would have us believe—is provided ready-made by the fragmentary historical record.

Unintelligibility

"By wise memory and by wise oblivion: it all lies there," the preface to *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (1845) tells us.[37] At times Carlyle seems to resemble the angry customer who complained both that the food was bad and that the portions were too small. For if he dwells on the fact that we do not have enough information about the past, he also groans like many other historians about the fact that there is too much information available: excess and scarcity. To be sure, this apparent contradiction can be resolved in light of the fact that, as far as his priorities are concerned, it is generally only the uninteresting aspects of the past that have been recorded. But his concern with informational excess also reflects in a particular form the "fear of long books" that I discussed in Chapter 2. If at first sight extensive documentation seems an improvement on no information at all, it can turn out to be an out of the frying pan into the fire alternative.

Too much information brings confusion rather than enlightenment, the sense of being confronted by something that demands yet more efforts to make sense of it.

Carlyle's edition of Cromwell's letters begins with an almost phantasmagorical description of the "shoreless Chaos"[38] of the archival material with which the would-be historian anno 1840 had to deal. In the persona of Anti-Dryasdust (obviously inspired by the antiquary invented by Scott), he laments the excess of what he considers insignificant information (including the "hideous amorphous statutes at large") in the as yet largely unorganized archive.[39] Where Le Grand d'Aussy expressed a sense of terror, Carlyle describes his horror:

> Confusion piled on confusion to your utmost horizon's edge: obscure, in lurid twilight as of the shadow of Death; trackless, without index, without finger-post, or mark of any human foregoer;—where your human footstep, if you are still human, echoes bodeful through the gaunt solitude.... There, all vanquished, overwhelmed under such waste lumber-mountains, the wreck and dead ashes of some six unbelieving generations, does the Age of Cromwell and his Puritans lie hidden from us.[40]

Carlyle's horror at the mountains upon mountains of moldy documents awaiting him was based more on his imaginings of the archive than on his actual experiences there, which were rather limited. Unlike his near contemporary Ranke, who extolled the pleasures of the archival sanctuary, Carlyle disliked working in libraries—in this he remained the old-fashioned man of letters—and used an assistant and printed sources wherever he could.[41] As soon as the reader becomes aware of the fact that Carlyle was using printed sources, the latter's wonderstruck declaration that he was perhaps the first person in more than two hundred years to read certain speeches of Cromwell rings a little false, becoming an indication of his historical imagination rather than of his actual labors in the field. Be that as it may, Carlyle's gothic-colored evocation of the masses of detail confronting him in the archives can be seen as a romantic version of the perennial self-image of historians as (lone) laborers facing an awesome amount of work.

Underlying his horror at the amount of work involved in sifting through the records was his frustration at the ultimate elusiveness of past experience: if history is about "living men" in the past, an idea Carlyle shared with Scott, how does one get a hold on their experience? The problem was not just a matter of information. Because of the differences in mentality between Cromwell's age and his own, it was very difficult, if not indeed impossible, to understand the world once again through Cromwell's eyes.[42] In this way, the difficulties of maintaining a coherent point of view on his-

torical events, which I discussed earlier, were compounded by Carlyle's awareness of the radical alterity of the past and the limits to his own understanding of alien points of view on the world.

In terms that sound familiar to modern ears, Carlyle argued that information does not lend itself automatically to narration since narrative is one-dimensional and linear, whereas action is "solid."[43] A narrative can only be, as he described his "story" of the French Revolution, a "faint ineffectual Emblem of that Grand Miraculous Tissue, and Living Tapestry... which did weave itself then in very fact."[44] In order to make an area of the past intelligible, then, the historian has to impose order on his "amorphous" subject (one of the adjectives Carlyle repeatedly used to describe Cromwell).[45] The practical and intellectual difficulties involved in making the ever-ramifying field of events intelligible are reflected among other things in the many changes of plan that occurred in Carlyle's treatment of Cromwell as well as in the protracted writing of the monstrously long biography of Frederick the Great.[46] As D. J. Trela has shown in his detailed account of the genesis of *Cromwell,* Carlyle took a long time and many revisions before deciding what form was most suited to his material (at one point groaning in a letter that his thoughts lay around him "inarticulate, sour, fermenting, bottomless... of use to no one").[47] His decision to edit and comment on Cromwell's letters, rather than write a traditional biography *ex cathedra,* can be explained by the possibilities that extensive quotation from original sources afforded for recreating the worldview of another period. (In Chapter 4 I will come back to editing as a historiographical form.) To a certain extent, however, it is surely also a capitulation in face of the incommensurability of worldviews.

Narrating events seemed all the more complicated to Carlyle in the light of his belief that human history is "by very nature... a labyrinth and chaos."[48] As we have seen, he was by no means the first historian to reflect on historical composition in terms of the organization of chaotic material into a coherent shape. But whereas earlier historians supposed coherence to correspond to a structure that, with more or less effort, could be uncovered in events, Carlyle apparently tended toward the belief that events—in any case, the events of modern history following the French Revolution—were in themselves chaotic. They were not so much meaningless as, to use his own phrase, too meaningful: "endlessly significant."

What sort of historical discourse could such a view of events sustain? Although Carlyle considered past events to be endlessly significant and only partly fathomable, he stuck to the traditional belief that the function of history *writing* is to produce meaningful statements about the past whereby the past becomes usable for the present. To be sure, he supported the idea that historical writing should have a firm empirical basis, and indeed in-

sisted that empirical reconstruction of past experience should have priority over the production of philosophical generalities: "Till once experience have got it, philosophy will reconcile herself to wait at the door."[49] Nevertheless, Carlyle seems to have been reluctant to keep philosophy or "the truth-of-meaning" waiting at the door indefinitely, while researchers gathered materials and reproduced the chaotic plenitude of actual experience. If the historical world is shoreless and chaotic, he argued, then the onus must fall on the historian to select for examination those aspects of the past from which the latter-day public can learn at least something. Indeed, it is precisely because reality is shoreless that it behooves the historian to become a mediator between disorder and order, between endless significance and a coherent discourse. As he reflected in the course of his history of the French Revolution, "History tells us many things.... Let us two, o reader ... from its endless significance endeavour to extract what may in present circumstances be adapted for us."[50]

Although the reader is invoked at such moments in collegial terms as an equal, Carlyle effectively arrogated to himself alone, in the name of superior insight, the right to decide what is worth knowing or what, like the chronic convulsions of Irish history, can simply be written off as "a huge blot, an indiscriminate blackness; which the human memory cannot willingly charge itself with!"[51] In thus taking on the role of arbiter between memory and oblivion, between order and unutterable blots, Carlyle claimed the sort of to-be-taken-at-his-word authority that we have already come across in Scott. This form of authority supposes, in the words of Nancy Partner, that "truth is not grounded in verification but in intention—lodged in the author who grasps the essential meaning and must find a suitable verbal (or visual) equivalent for the audience."[52] In thus playing the role of arbiter between memory and oblivion, Carlyle designated certain fields of inquiry as historiographical no-go areas and attributed "unintelligibility" in a selective manner to the past. Accordingly, the word *chaos* has three meanings in his work. He used it in an epistemological sense to designate the historian's difficulties in understanding events, in an ontological sense to designate the complex nature of events in general, and in a political sense to designate certain undesirable states of affairs, that is, periods of social disorder like that of France during the Revolution or Ireland since the medieval period.[53] And on occasion, he slid almost imperceptibly between these different domains, rejecting as *inherently* unrepresentable that which he personally found unintelligible or, what is linked to this, politically uncongenial. If at times the disorder of the subject matter provides a measure of the heroism of the historian who must decipher it, at other times the attribution of disorder becomes a way of legitimizing ignorance. With respect to certain parts of the past, then, Carlyle seems to rest content

with an "unutterable blot" or "indiscriminate blackness" from which nothing can be learned. Whether it comes from a lack of knowledge, a lack of imagination, political prejudice, or a combination of all of these, his own failure to understand is enshrined as the proper way to consider certain periods, indeed, is presented as a property of the past itself.

It is in the light of this role of arbiter that the importance attached by Carlyle to Great Men in his writings from *The French Revolution* onward can be understood. The Great Man plays a role in ensuring social order, and as such his role implicitly parallels that of the historian, who makes sense of the otherwise fathomless past. Hero worship is "the living rock amid all rushings-down whatsoever;—the one fixed point in modern revolutionary history, otherwise as if bottomless and shoreless."[54] Thus the hero for Carlyle is an organizing principle both at the level of events (his legacy is social order) and at the level of discourse (like Michelet's witch, he provides the historian with a focus around which collective phenomena can be represented). Carlyle's political appreciation of heroes would thus seem to have been nourished by his own desire as a historian to make sense of an otherwise fathomless past and find some ordering principle with which to make it "usable" by talking about it in a meaningful way. The biography of a Great Man offered a focus for representing collective events and a teleological principle with which to explain the relations between events (thus Carlyle represented the French Revolution as ending only with the restoration of order by Napoleon). The Great Man thus offered the possibility of a point of view from which meaningful history could be marked off from the chaotic—at least roughly. For as his earlier comments in "On Biography" suggested and as his own experience with Frederick and Cromwell bore out, even biographies do not come with a ready-made shape and without raw edges.

The Pleasures of Ignorance

Carlyle's work highlights the importance of ignorance as an element in historical understanding: what is presented as knowledge is silhouetted against that which is irrevocably lost to knowledge, hidden, or simply unintelligible. The sheer amount of emphasis he laid on the many obstacles in the historian's way is surely one of the reasons, along with his verbose moralizing, for his failure to have a major impact on the theory or practice of the nascent historical profession despite the contemporary popularity of his work.[55] But it is as surely one of the reasons for the continued aesthetic appeal of some of his writing (at least when it is taken in small doses) long after it has lost whatever authority it may once have enjoyed as a source of

historical knowledge. His evocation of the limits of our historical understanding in relation to the vastness of the field, its obscurity, or its endless significance stimulates the imagination of readers to reflect upon what lies beyond their purview and upon the act itself of reconstructing and making sense of the past. Arguably, it is this sort of imaginative appeal that some recent works of cultural history possess. In this regard, it is worth noting the current popularity of suspension points (Arlette Farge's account of begging in eighteenth-century Paris, for example, ends with "..." indicating a possible alternative perspective on her material) and of the interrogative form (Jean-Michel Raynaud's *Voltaire soi-disant* is littered with question marks).[56] Used as alternatives to the traditional mode of assertion, the unanswered question and the suspended phrase conjure up the *échappée* or residue within the representation itself. With the help of such strategies, the limits of the history are acknowledged in such a way as to enhance its imperfection and hence provisionality, but without compromising its status as a serious representation. (This modesty is arguably also an attempt to be one step ahead of potential criticism by fixing in advance the location of limits—a point I shall return to.)

The aesthetic effect I am describing here involves focusing the attention of the reader on the nature of the historical representation as much as on the positive information given about the past. To the extent that it draws attention to the activity of representing the past, it is comparable to the "aesthetic function" that Mukařovksý and others have described as the power of a piece of writing to draw attention to itself and its own making, and that I already mentioned in discussing Michelet. However, the particular aesthetic effect I am concerned with here is not merely another instance of an attraction borrowed by historians from novelists (as is arguably the case with narrativity, for example) and hence a by-product of fictionality. On the contrary: it derives directly from the cognitive enterprise that defines historical writing, that is to say, from the historians' engagement with a multifariously accessible historical reality that exists beyond their particular imaginations. In making this point, my view of historiographical aesthetics diverges from that of Frank Ankersmit, who has recently linked the "pleasures of history" to the sheer skill involved in reconstructing the past in an engaging way, a feat he explicitly dissociates from the work's perceived engagement with "a reality behind the representation."[57] In my argument, the aesthetic effect particular to historical representation derives precisely from the realization that there is so much of the past beyond the historical text that is still unknown, and that understanding the past as a whole is an almost unimaginably complex enterprise. It follows from this that the more historians meet the resistance of their material by going as far as they can into its complexity, and the more they can express this re-

sistance, the greater the aesthetic appeal of their work. When it comes to this effect, novelists with their fragmented-manuscripts-found-in-a-cupboard, their fabricated ellipses, and their disingenuous questions about imaginary events can at most try to imitate the historians whose work is defamiliarizing by default.[58]

The most appropriate term for describing this particular aesthetic effect is still the "sublime." In applying the term here, I use the "sublime" in the first instance to designate a specifically aesthetic value and not simply a philosophical stance (more recent discussions of the sublime have tended to emphasize the latter). It is that uncomfortable form of pleasure—that "delightful horror" as Burke put it—that arises from the positive valorization of a confrontation with something that exceeds our capacity to control it or to comprehend it as a totality. The confrontation with something unmasterable is unpleasant in principle, because it is threatening to our persons or to our self-esteem, but the analytic of the sublime provides a framework within which the ability to seek out such confrontations brings its own rewards.[59] Obscurity, vastness, manifestations of power are not so much in themselves sublime as the source of a sublime experience on the part of the onlookers who reflect on them. As Burke, among others, had argued, and the point is still presumably valid today, the imagination is strongly affected by those vast objects that are but fleetingly glimpsed and of which we have only a very "obscure and imperfect Idea." As Burke also pointed out in comparing the relative insipidity of a theatrical performance to the terrifying pleasures of being witness to an actual execution, real phenomena affect the imagination more powerfully than merely imaginary situations.[60] Carlyle's conceptualization of historical ignorance, with its emphasis on the boundlessness, obscurity, and the almost unimaginable complexity of the past was clearly influenced by the eighteenth-century discourse of the sublime and represents a sustained attempt to transfer its insights from the domain of natural forces (that had been the principal concern of Burke and Kant) to the domain of history.

The representation of all conceivable aspects of the past, which was put on the historiographical agenda in the eighteenth century and which is a central theme in contemporary practice, goes hand in glove, both historically and theoretically, with an aesthetics of the sublime. The latter is based not so much on the "beauty" of that which is well made and complete in itself as on the "aweful" engagement of the individual in contemplating the limits of our knowledge of the past and on the extent of our ability to "present the unpresentable."[61] At this point, it is worth recalling that historicism emerged roughly at the same time as aesthetics, and that they have in common the importance they attach to the concrete responses of individuals. As René Wellek has put it: "Aesthetics meant a turn to individu-

ality, to the concrete response of the individual; it prepared the way to a true understanding of history, not as something dead and schematic, but as a living process."[62] As we have seen, Carlyle shared with contemporaries like Thierry and Michelet the belief that future historiography should allow readers a more imaginative involvement with a past with which they could identify even as they perceived it as radically other.

Like everything else, sublimity may be simulated. If the historical sublime derives in theory from the real conditions of historical research and writing, Carlyle's writings also indicate how these may also sometimes be faked—fictitious, without being fictional. As we have seen with respect to Carlyle's archival practices, for example, his theoretical awareness of the conditions of historical writing enabled him on occasion to mimic the sort of experiences historians actually do encounter and hence, under false pretenses, increase the imaginative power of his writing. Even more important, in the light of the tendency nowadays to link a sense of the sublimity of history to a critical or radical politics, Carlyle's work points to the fact that, in itself, the sublime is not linked to a particular ideological program. Instead, it provides support for the view, expressed by Ronald Paulson, Christine Pries, and Dominick LaCapra among others, that a sublime view of the world is an interpretive stance, with in-built aesthetic power, that may be put to different uses. If it may be used to promote a heightened critical awareness of the limits of the knowledge on offer, it may also encourage an interpreter to step into the breach and lay down the intellectual law to others by projecting a self-made coherence onto events.[63] Both the critical and the authoritarian uses of the sublime seem to be present in Carlyle's work, hovering as it does between an evocation of the nameless peasants who have dropped out of the pages of official history and the exaltation of heroes and hero worship, a "living rock amid all rushings-down." What seems to link these two interests is his extreme awareness of the boundlessness of history and the limitations of our discourse.

In an essay entitled "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," Hayden White challenges the belief that it is always desirable to try to represent the past in an ordered intelligible form and, echoing Lyotard, he advocates as an ethically and cognitively superior option a history writing that would emphasize the disorder of events, their sublime resistance to form.[64] White cites Carlyle as an example of a writer whose view of history as an "ever-working Chaos of being" offers a possible alternative to the professionalized "disciplined and de-sublimated" history that has developed since the romantic period. This alternative view of history would goad human beings on "to endow their lives with a meaning for which they alone are fully responsible" by showing them the futility of looking for meaningfulness in history.[65] Carlyle's view of history-

as-event would indeed seem congenial to what White is proposing. But to see Carlyle's work exclusively in these terms is to ignore the possible tension between a general theory of history-as-event and the cultural practice of writing history for third parties, which calls for at least a minimum of coherence and desublimating intelligibility. (White himself acknowledged this difference between philosophy and historiographical practice in an earlier discussion of Carlyle.)[66] What is particularly intriguing about Carlyle is that his awareness of the sublimity of history went together with a commitment to writing in an instructive way about the past (so that it could be desublimated, to use White's terms). His own tolerance of sublimity was apparently limited.[67] Thus at times his commitment to writing instructively led to his exploiting the aesthetic power of the sublime to advance his own views, fabricating meaning while seeming to struggle with a recalcitrant past. The complexity of this interplay between the historical sublime as aesthetic effect and the projection of ideological preferences is perhaps most clearly illustrated by *Past and Present* (1843). Accordingly, I want to round off this discussion by looking closely at his practice in that work.

Book 2 of *Past and Present* (once described by Lord Acton as "the most remarkable piece of historical thinking in the language"[68]) is Carlyle's attempt to represent at length the life of one of the obscure heroes of history. Entitled "The Ancient Monk," it gives an account of the twelfth-century abbacy of Samson at the monastery of St. Edmund's, and was made possible by the recent publication by the Camden Society of the Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond (introduced as yet another of "those vanished Existences, whose work has not yet vanished," like the builders of Stonehenge, the writers of the Iliad, and the pavers of London streets).[69] In keeping with his fascination with the "dark untenanted places" of the past, Carlyle stresses throughout the work the manner in which his source both reveals and conceals the reality of everyday life in the monastery. His commentary on the intermittent, imperfect, partially translucent, "wintry twilight" quality of Jocelin's testimony punctuates the narrative (e.g., 42, 48), investing certain items of information with all the more value by emphasizing their rarity. Thus the daily activities of Bury St. Edmund's are espied "through a glass darkly" (43): "through dim fitful apertures, we can see... cloth-making; looms dimly going, dye-vats, and old women spinning yarn" (61).

The attractions of Jocelin's chronicle lay not only in its information concerning life in a twelfth-century monastery (the details of the election of an abbot, for example, or the nature of an abbot's administrative tasks), but in its focus on an abbot who, in Carlyle's opinion, carried out his functions particularly well. As such, he represents one of the "nameless great," one of the "long-forgotten brave" of history (127) who contributed to the maintenance or development of civil society. A true leader, he can govern oth-

ers because he can govern himself: "There exists in him a heart-abhorrence of whatever is incoherent, pusillanimous, unveracious,—that is to say, chaotic, *un*governed" (85). Attempting among other things to bring order into the "bottomless confusion of Convent finance," his "clear-beaming eyesight" is "like *Fiat Lux* in that inorganic waste whirlpool" and "of the chaos makes a *kosmos* or ordered world" (88–89).

Apparently in accordance with Jocelin's chronicle, Carlyle's account of the regime of this governor also comes to an abrupt halt, the reader being presented only with the fragment of a biography and not the whole thing. In a vivid passage evoking the obscurity of history and the limits of our knowledge, Carlyle announces the dropping of the curtain on Abbot Samson and his monastery. Having been briefly glimpsed, they go to join Clarendon's nameless peasant in eternal darkness:

> The magnanimous Abbot makes preparation for departure; departs, and—And Jocelin's Boswellean Narrative, suddenly shorn-through by the scissors of Destiny, *ends.* There are no words more; but a black line, and leaves of blank paper. Irremediable: the miraculous hand, that held all this theatric-machinery, suddenly quits hold; impenetrable Time-Curtains rush down; in the mind's eye all is again dark, void; with loud dinning in the mind's ear, our real-phantasmagory of St. Edmundsbury plunges into the bosom of the Twelfth Century again, and all is over . . . and there is nothing left but a mutilated black Ruin amid green botanic expanses, and oxen, sheep and dilettanti pasturing in their places. (121)

Carlyle's insistence on the limitations of his access to the past supplements Jocelin's text and helps establish life in a twelfth-century monastery as a tantalizing object of curiosity: something about which we do not (yet) know everything, but that is worth knowing. The reader whose curiosity has actually been stimulated by Carlyle's evocative account of Samson's abbacy may turn to Jocelin's chronicle to find out more about its distinct textual flavor or about Samson. But that reader will be struck by what Carlyle has left out of his own account. While insisting that he is dependent on his source, indeed while lamenting its lacunae, the historian has in fact played down the references in Jocelin's text to the mistakes made by Samson and the opposition his policies met with among the other monks, particular with respect to the function of cellarer.[70] Thus Carlyle's narrative breaks off with a synopsis of the increasing respect in which this Great Man is held by the world at large (if he has to go to France it is to advise King Richard), whereas Jocelin's breaks off on a decidedly equivocal note. Since the abbot wants to leave his affairs in order and frictions have been running high, he promises the monks that in the future they will have more input into the

running of affairs and that compensation will be made for past grievances: "This done, there was a calm, but not a great calm, since 'in promises there's none but may be rich.' "[71] The comparison between text and source reveals that what is actually offered to readers as historical knowledge plucked from the jaws of oblivion has been selectively and purposively gleaned so as to bend the facts to suit the will of the interpreter.[72] Reenter the *échappée.*

The fact that aesthetic effect can be used in a manipulative fashion should not lead us to the hasty (and unrealistic) conclusion that it should also be banned as a "bad thing" from historical writing. Again, like any instrument, it is how you use it that matters, and how you use it depends in part on *where* you do so. At this point the difference between fiction and historical representation as communicative practices becomes relevant again. Once it becomes apparent within the context of a historical work that an evocation of the historical sublime is not the result of a genuine attempt to overcome ignorance and to push back the boundaries of the unintelligible but a rhetorical pose adopted for some reason(s) or other—laziness, mystification, aestheticism, a deliberate or unconscious desire to grind some ideological axe—then sublimity gives way to a sense of deception, and criticism. In the case of novels, simulation is not subject to criticism in the same way—unless, to recall my discussion in Chapter 1, we are dealing with a piece of *historical* fiction. Critical reactions to historical fiction are optional, however, in the sense that they seem to depend on whether the topic treated has a particular charge or not for the public that it reaches. In the case of historiography, in contrast, a critical attitude is, in theory at least, part of the professional protocol.

It is precisely, as I have been arguing here, because there is *more* to history than is told in a single text that it is imaginatively appealing in its sublime way. For the very same reason, the reader may be tempted to hold up a work like Carlyle's against other accounts of the same topic and so come to criticize him for ignoring those aspects of the past that seem to contradict his thesis or, to recall his treatment of Ireland, for attributing indiscriminate unintelligibility to a set of events that might well be made intelligible from another point of view. The perhaps disconcerting fact illustrated by Carlyle's work that the historical sublime may be evoked under false pretenses is thus offset by the existence of a built-in control mechanism arising from the *same* source, that is, an engagement with an objectively existing and multifariously accessible historical world, and the ongoing communal effort to go beyond the limits of what we already know and what we understand. In theory at least, these control mechanisms should be even more operative nowadays in the context of professionalization than they were in the days when Carlyle saw himself arbitrating alone between "wise memory" and "oblivion."

Carlyle's work indicates how the difficulties endemic to historical writing can be placed at the center of a theory of historical practice. At the same time, his work suggests that the perception of difficulties can itself become formulaic and conventionalized, made to order. Peter de Bolla has argued that such conventionalizaton is in fact an inevitable part of "the discourse of the sublime" as cultural practice. While the discourse of the sublime provides a framework in which "unmasterable" experiences become valorized, it is also an instrument in our ongoing attempts to describe and comprehend what seems beyond the grasp of understanding and language. The "sublime" is by definition unsustainable or, as De Bolla puts this, the discourse of the sublime tends to produce its own limits in the very act of providing a vocabulary with which the unmasterable can be domesticated—desublimated—and turned into an object of aesthetic consumption.[73] In light of this, I want to consider the sustainability of a historiography *à rebours* in which so much emphasis is placed on its limits.

4

Literature and the Longing for History

> But the mountain men of Scotland will soon have disappeared from the face of the earth. The mountain areas are becoming daily more depopulated. Big estates, the ruin of Rome, will also be the ruin of Scotland.... Soon the Highlanders will only exist in history and in Walter Scott. In Edinburgh people nowadays stop to stare whenever they see the tartan and the claymore. They are disappearing; they are emigrating; the mountain bagpipes are now playing only one tune:
>
> "Cha till, cha till, sin tuile"
>
> We will never come back, never come back,
>
> Never.
>
> —Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France; Le moyen âge*

Sources

History, as distinct from personal memory, is knowledge of the past based on the mediation of publicly available sources. Indeed, historical writing is arguably as much defined by its reliance on the evidence supplied by other texts or artifacts as by its referentiality. In the words of Michel de Certeau, it is a "stratified" or "laminated" discourse.[1] This stratification involves a distinct type of intertextuality whereby a functional relation is established between the discourse of the historian, who is interpreting and

explaining the past, and the texts or other artifacts that yield the information about the past on which that interpretation is based. If this intertextuality is a structural feature of historical writing, its precise form nevertheless changes from one period to another.

History until at least the end of the seventeenth century was known as a "literary" history, the ultimate purpose of which was to prove some philosophical or political point by "cutting-and-pasting" the statements of recognized authorities. Modern historiography is based, in contrast, on the idea of a critical engagement with sources. As Collingwood put it: "The document hitherto called an authority now acquired a new status, properly described by calling it a "source," a word indicating simply that it contains the statement, without any implications as to its value. That it is *sub judice;* and it is the historian who judges."[2] The implication behind this courtroom metaphor is that once the historian has come to some sort of judgment as to the reliability of witnesses or the interest of their testimony, they can be dismissed from the courtroom and relegated to the supporting footnotes.[3]

In recent years, however, this interrogate-and-dismiss attitude to sources has come under critical scrutiny for several reasons and from several quarters, and this reconsideration allows for a fresh look at citation strategies in the past. To begin with, the so-called linguistic turn of the seventies and eighties made historians more aware of their own use of language and the language of their sources, which are often themselves complex texts.[4] Even as such texts provide evidence about the past, then, it is evidence that remains bound up with the source. The witness refuses to be dismissed. Or to use another metaphor: sources are no longer viewed as begrimed windows on the past, which a good cleaning will make fully transparent. Instead, they are opaque windows of frosted glass, which—like Carlyle's "through a glass darkly"—both reveal and conceal what is on the other side. So influential has this idea become that Carlo Ginzburg has recently complained of the influence of a skeptical attitude that no longer sees sources as windows at all, but rather as walls cutting off access to the past.[5] Echoing Carlyle's discussion of our dependence on details to catch glimpses of the past and using yet another metaphor, Michel de Certeau described sources as flotsam and jetsam thrown up by a presence that has now withdrawn. As he puts it, lived experience or the "violence of the body" only reaches the written page "through absence, through the intermediary of documents that the historian has been able to see on the sands from which a presence has since been washed away, and through a murmur that lets us hear—but from afar—the unknown immensity that seduces and menaces our knowledge."[6]

The current awareness of the autonomy, opacity, and fragmentary character of sources is linked to the recent expansion of the field of cultural his-

tory, where texts reproduced from the past are both in themselves objects of investigation and potential sources for knowledge of past practices and attitudes. Within the framework of cultural history, texts from the past are not just sources of information about public events. As "transcribed experience," to use Brian Stock's phrase, they are also a precious means of gaining access to the subjectivity of those who lived long ago.[7] Thus where Carlyle attempted to enter into the unfamiliar world of Cromwell through editing his letters, and Prosper de Barante used extensive quotation from the chronicles as a way of capturing the flavor of the Middle Ages in his *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne* (1824), many recent discussions of the so-called New Cultural History have similarly stressed the pivotal role of textual expressions as ever-present and reproducible, albeit often highly complex, expressions of past attitudes.[8] With the desire to represent the "silences" of history, which I discussed in Chapter 2, has come the necessity of looking to new types of sources that, however imperfect, may offer some insight into otherwise poorly recorded aspects of the past and, more generally, into the lived experience of days gone by. The attempt to make a wide variety of texts functional as sources of information has meant developing new strategies of reading and citation beyond those suggested by the "unpack-and-dismiss" attitude mentioned earlier. Philippe Carrard has noted in this regard the popularity among Annales historians of wholesale quotation from primary sources within the main body of their texts.[9]

The growing autonomy of source texts within the historical representation is not just a function of the interest in new topics as such. It is linked to the particular conception of the historian's role which underlies the very project of cultural history. This revised view of the historian's role has its origins in the idea, characteristic of emergent historicism in the late eighteenth century, that historicity was a feature of all aspects of experience and that the writing of history should aim to bridge the differences between past and present with the help of empathy. As we have seen, one of the main impulses behind historiographical innovations at that time was the idea that history should attempt to get as close as possible to the everyday past as it was *experienced* by contemporaries and should be written in such a way that the latter-day public could vividly imagine that experience. A similar project also lies behind more recent historical agendas. Within the framework of such a project, the role of the historian is less to interrogate, judge, and dismiss than to "listen in on" and "think along with" the testimony of someone else and let the "voices of the past" be heard in the present.

In what follows, I want to focus on the citation of historical sources—in particular literary sources—as a starting point for further reflection on the aesthetics of the historical sublime and on its limits. In doing so, I shall go back in time to Walter Scott's earlier work and forward in time to some re-

cent historiographical practice. Before he became the author of *Waverley*, Scott had a successful career as a poet and editor. If his novels can be seen as having played the role of catalyst within the historical culture of the time, they too had a history in Scott's poetic oeuvre and the antiquarianism to which he himself contributed.

History and Minstrelsy (Scott encore)

Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) is prefaced by a narrative describing the "last minstrel" of the title. Old and infirm, the last of his kind, accompanied only by an orphan boy, he regrets the past and longs for the quiet of death:

> The last of all the Bards was he,
> Who sung of Border chivalry;
> For, welladay! their date was fled,
> His tuneful brethren all were dead;
> And he, neglected and oppress'd,
> Wished to be with them, and at rest.

This minstrel happens to wander into the castle of the Duchess of Monmouth and receives such a generous welcome there that his spirits are restored enough for him to burst into a song. As he ecstatically sings an ancient romance, both he and his listeners are transported in spirit back to the Middle Ages:

> The present scene, the future lot,
> His toils, his wants, were all forgot:
> Cold diffidence, and age's frost,
> In the full tide of song were lost.

When the minstrel has finished his song, he sets up house in a cottage outside the castle walls, where he will ecstatically rerecite the lay any time he is asked for it:

> Then would he sing achievements high,
> And circumstance of chivalry,
> Till the rapt traveller would stay,
> Forgetful of the closing day.

Scott's *Lay* is an example of a literary text that implicitly claims to convey historical knowledge, not so much through the representation of past

events as through the imitation of poetry from an earlier period. As the preface to the first edition put it, the poem was "intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland" (an idea picked up by the *Annual Review* [1804], which judged the poem to be "an accurate picture of customs and manners among the Scottish borderers at the time it refers to").[10] The idea that "imitating" older poems could have historiographical value was something Scott defended strenuously in his "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad" (1830), only stipulating that the invention be avowed as such. After all, the successful simulation of ancestral voices requires an intimate knowledge of their way of conceiving the world as much as neo-antique furniture and architecture require an intimate knowledge of design and techniques. What better way to bridge the gap between past and present through an act of understanding than to write in the same manner? This idea of reproduction poetry, which was widely practiced at the end of the eighteenth century from Macpherson to Chatterton, is itself an interesting variation on the traditional principle of *aemulatio* in literature, which valued the imitation of classical models as a way of ensuring a sense of continuity between past and present.[11] The self-conscious "imitation" or "reproduction" of vernacular poetry in the second half of the eighteenth century can be seen, then, as both an acknowledgment of the discontinuity between past and present ("people wrote differently then," as it were) and an expression of a certain confidence in our being able, albeit in a limited way, to overcome historical alterity ("we can still do the same if we make the effort"). In light of this, there is a lot to be said for Stephen Bann's claim that the distinguishing mark of the period 1750–1850 in historiographical terms is as much the increasingly expert production of pseudohistorical forgeries as the emergence of professional history.[12] Most important for my discussion here, Scott's *Lay* thematizes the role of poetry as a bridge between past and present.

The last minstrel, as we have seen, is introduced to the reader as an endangered species, on his last legs: sick, frail, bereaved, accompanied only by an orphan boy. As a *last* minstrel he is thus the imaginary counterpart of all those other "last of their race" who, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, had become the focus of an anxiety-ridden realization that there really are points of no return in history and that certain phenomena become extinct: Mohicans, dodos, minstrels, Highlandmen, they can never, ever come back.[13] And because others can never come back, those who survive have to come to terms with the state of "coming after." This is a challenge central to historicism and its attempts to bridge the gap between past and present through some act of understanding or reconstruction. As a last *minstrel,* on the other hand, Scott's figure also represents a way of over-

coming some of the sense of loss with which those who come after must live: when he recites the ancient romance, he establishes a direct connection with the past. Not only is he presented as one more link in a continuous chain of oral transmission, but his recitation is also the means by which he recreates the past "as it was." Indeed, to the extent that he uses the same words as all his predecessors, he reenacts the past in the present, with the audience being put in the position of medieval listeners.[14] If "reenacting the past" in one form or another is seen as the key to historical understanding, then Scott's work suggests that a literary text may be a useful instrument in achieving that goal.

The key to this function is the persistence of an utterance as a verbal artifact that can be reproduced, in oral or written form, even after the communicative situation in which it was originally produced has long disappeared. The essence of textuality is thus reproducibility and "untimeliness"—which is not to say that this potential is realized in every instance. In practice, of course, many texts are never reproduced and circulated in new contexts (shopping lists and theater programs usually just disappear or are left moldering in some attic or archive). But "untimely" circulation in new contexts and the capacity to function independently of any particular context seem to be normal features of what we call literary works and, more generally, of works of art. By "literary" I understand then "display texts," that is, texts that are used, and usually designed, for the purposes of play and for contemplation as artifacts, rather than as instruments for addressing immediate pragmatic concerns.[15] As I pointed out in discussing *La sorcière* in Chapter 2, the literarity of a text is linked to its apparent "refusal" to be expendable, to be a transparent package around a discrete amount of information, which can then be tossed away after use. It is considered valuable in itself. This persistence of the textual artifact in new contexts may in part be attributed to the function it plays. But this in turn seems to be linked to the way in which the text in question is composed—a matter of narrativity, fictionality, or the complexity and ambivalence of the words used, which constantly invite reinterpretation. Whatever the particular reason, the reproducibility defining literary artifacts means that they are in fact more an "objective given" than the historical context in which they were produced and which can no longer be reproduced as is. Literary texts thus persist across time like flies in amber, albeit differing from the insects in that texts have a capacity to "come alive" again and speak to latter-day readers. In contrast, the context in which the texts were produced can now only be reconstructed by historians on the basis of necessarily incomplete evidence. This means in effect, as Gabrielle Spiegel has pointed out, that texts are "realer" than history: whereas texts persist as concrete artifacts, the world

in which they were produced has first to be reconstructed by the historian before it takes on reality at a later point in time.[16]

The "untimeliness" of literary texts (in this they are exemplary for all art forms)[17] is thematized in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* in the idea that the last minstrel's last song is endlessly reproduced and recited. Once he gets going, he becomes oblivious to the constraints of time, "forgetful" of the "closing day" as he sings over and over again of the deeds of yore. Scott's fictitious lay can be seen as a variation on his own activities as a collector and editor of ballads and songs. Jane Millgate has pointed out that the *Lay* was originally designed as part of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,* the collection of traditional poems from the Border region, supplemented by a few modern imitations, which Scott published in 1802. Millgate also draws attention to the fact that the poetical texts in this collection, particularly the historical ballads relating to the Covenanting period, are lavishly annotated, a combination of text and paratext that is both a foretaste of his novels and an echo of eighteenth-century antiquarian practice.[18] For Scott was by no means the only avid collector and annotator of noncanonical texts who was active at this period. Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,* for example, had been published in 1765; Joseph Ritson's *Ancient Songs and Ballads from the Reign of King Henry the Third to the Revolution* in 1790 ("Henry the Third" was changed to "Henry the Second" in subsequent editions); George Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Romances in Metre* in 1805; Robert Jamieson's *Popular Ballads and Songs, from Traditions, Manuscripts, and Scarce Editions* in 1806; David Laing's *Select Remains of the Ancient Popular Poetry of Scotland* in 1822 (Le Grand d'Aussy's work as a collector may also be mentioned in this context).[19] Such collections were often presented not so much for their literary merit as for the valuable information about the past they contained—in particular information about the "manners" of our ancestors. Thus Bishop Percy referred to his collection as "exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages," and according to a later commentator, Percy "opened to us the road into the Early English home where we have spent so many pleasant hours."[20] Thus Ritson introduced his anthology against the background of "the favourable attention which the public has constantly shewn to works illustrating the history, the poetry, the language, the manners, or the amusements of their ancestors."[21] In a review of Ritson and Ellis that Scott published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1806, the author of the *Lay* echoed these sentiments. He also suggested that there might be an added value to such a "literary" history since it offered not only knowledge of different things but also a different form of knowledge, an idea summed up in the phrase "intimate knowledge":

> To form a just idea of our ancient history, we cannot help thinking that these works of fancy should be read along with the labours of the professed historian. The one teaches what our ancestors thought; how they lived; upon what motives they acted, and what language they spoke; and having attained this intimate knowledge of their sentiments, manners and habits, we are certainly better prepared to learn from the other the actual particulars of their annals.[22]

Carlo Ginzburg has shown that there was incidental recognition of the potential role of literary works as historical sources at least as early as Jean Chapelain's *De la lecture des vieux romans* (1647).[23] It would seem that by the second half of the eighteenth century, the idea was becoming something of a commonplace as scholars got more and more involved in editing literary works—both works of established writers (as in Scott's editions of Dryden [1808] and Swift [1814]) and noncanonized popular or medieval works. It is this interest in literary works as historical sources rather than as utterly "timeless" works of art that René Wellek referred to as the "new historicism" of eighteenth-century literary scholarship.[24]

The collections of popular and medieval poetry put together at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth represent a particular variant within antiquarianism. Where other antiquarians like Joseph Strutt focused on artifacts like coins, armory, and buildings, collectors like Percy, Ritson, and Scott focused on verbal artifacts. Their anthologies thus belong to the history of historical writing and not just to the history of English literary history where Wellek places them. As with other antiquarian texts, these are collections of disparate elements rather than "philosophical" narratives that would bring diverse items of information together under a single point of view. More precisely, they are collections of literary texts that are now displayed as potential sources for a history of the period in which they originated or of the even earlier periods to which they indirectly refer.

The word *potential* is crucial here as an indication of the fact that these texts are called to the witness stand, as it were, but that the cross-examination and the judgment regarding their historical significance are indefinitely postponed. They are not so much judged as displayed and re-cited. In being re-cited, moreover, they offer information in excess of the evidence they might actually yield if ever they were submitted to cross-examination and subordinated to some overarching argument. As the titles of several anthologies indicate, they represent the "remains" or "reliques" of a lost history focused on the experience of "our ancestors." This is a history that can be imagined, but that probably can never be written especially if it involves cultures that have become extinct or been destroyed.[25] For lack of anything better, then, the reader is offered a selection of verbal artifacts that,

though they are not complete as a collection, are complete in themselves. They may be all we shall ever have to go on. As *lieux de mémoire,* they allow for some form of imaginative engagement with the past, albeit a distinctly fuzzy one. This fuzziness stems from the fact that the poems convey information about the past in indirect rather than direct ways, and that the antiquarian who might have supplied an interpretation has withdrawn to the paratextual sidelines, leaving the readers relatively free to construe the poems in whatever way they fancy. The poems' power to evoke the past is thus linked both to the low-key intervention of the antiquarian and to the imaginative engagement of the reader who fills in the gaps. As the phrase "to evoke the past" suggests, what is at issue here, in the first instance, is the subjective feeling of being directly in touch with the past and not any objective correlation between the reader's image of the past and the actual past (as this might be established by someone else). As such the poems stimulate or reinforce the reader's sense of possessing a "heritage"—to use David Lowenthal's distinction—more than they provoke critical reflection on prior conceptions of the past.[26]

But even as the poems allow readers to imagine themselves in the homes of their ancestors (Le Grand's aim, it will be recalled), they are also a constant reminder of how much has been lost of human experience in former times. In keeping with this idea, the dyspeptic Joseph Ritson described his anthology as "scanty gleanings" from a moribund culture, "little fragments" that would be impossible "to bring together under one view."[27] Seen in this context, the poems are the amber, as it were, in which fragments of historical experience are preserved. In the 1830 preface to his minstrelsy collection, Scott presented the individual poems as fragmentary sources for a history of the popular experience of change:

> We may now turn our eyes to Scotland, where the facility of the dialect . . . and the habits, dispositions, and manners of the people were of old so favourable to the composition of ballad-poetry, that, had the Scottish songs been preserved, there is no doubt a very curious history might have been composed by means of minstrelsy alone, from the reign of Alexander III, in 1285, down to the close of the Civil Wars in 1745. That materials for such a collection existed, cannot be disputed, since the Scottish historians often refer to old ballads as sources for general tradition. But their regular preservation was not to be hoped for or expected. Successive garlands of song sprung, flourished, faded, and were forgotten, in their turn; and the names of a few specimens are only preserved, to show us how abundant the display of these wild flowers had been.[28]

The perceived "fragmentariness" of these collections reflects the indubitable fact that many popular poems were indeed irrevocably lost, dodos.

It might also be attributed to the fact that it was not very clear how the completeness of a given collection might ever be established, since the poems collected were to be sources for a sort of vaguely defined total history. The acknowledged incompleteness of these collections can also be seen, however, as grounded in contemporary attitudes to "fragmentariness" and its possible functions. As such they heark back to Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760). As I indicated in Chapter 2, "fragmentariness" became a philosophical and aesthetic category in the late eighteenth century designating a positive condition and not merely the absence of completeness. The point to be made here is that fragmentariness is congenial not just to the representation of certain topics that resist traditional forms but also to historicism itself to the extent that it is premised on a chronic sense of coming late. The historical artifact—be this a poem or a Carlylean pair of shoes—can be simultaneously a piece of the past itself, a source of evidence, and a focus for our longing to know more, to go beyond that evidence to the broader situation the object invokes without describing. It is when a historical artifact becomes the focus of attention in this way that it occasions the aesthetic effect of sublimity I discussed earlier.

Used as "pieces from the past" and as potential sources, the popular poems collected by the likes of Percy and Scott do not offer knowledge of the past as much as become a focus for what Gabrielle Spiegel has called the "desire for history":

> What I call the desire for history not only represents the desire to recuperate the past or the other but also marks the inaccessibility of that absent other, an irony that seems to me to be the very figure of history in the late-twentieth century.[29]

The Contemporary Historian as Re-citer

In an article on the "historical uses of literature" published in 1994, the literary scholar Philip Stewart protested against what he saw as the increasing willingness among contemporary cultural historians to use literary texts in their representation of the past. His immediate concern was Lynn Hunt's *Family Romance of the French Revolution* (1992), but his criticism extended to the many other contemporary historians who, in one way or another, have been using literary texts as sources for history. Crudely expressed, Stewart's conclusion would seem to be that historians should leave literature alone since "historical writing" and "literary sources" are incompatible: fictional and poetic texts are not unique, referential responses to particular

situations and they are often not representative of dominant ideologies (as Stewart writes, "Since literature may testify as much to the counterculture... as to the passively accepted norm, how can it ever be relied upon, per se, as proof of anything?").[30]

The features of literary texts that Stewart cites as arguments against their use as historical evidence are undoubtedly defects within the framework of a traditional historiography focused on particular events and confident of its ability to discern the underlying pattern of those events within the framework of some "great story." But these very defects may become assets in the context of other subjects, within the framework of different norms of coherence, and, what is most relevant here, within the framework of an epistemology less confident of our ability to reduce the past to some all-encompassing pattern and less confident of the desirability of doing so. If the principles of "provisionality," "incompleteness," and "compromise" have long been acknowledged as inevitable by-products of practice, their inevitability is now being more openly recognized in theory and thematized in practice. It is this which explains the apparent attractions of literary works and of paintings (these can also be reproduced out of context) for contemporary cultural historians.[31] In what follows, I want to illustrate this idea by looking at two recent examples of historiographical practice.

The first one is Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *La sorcière de Jasmin* (1983), a contribution to the renewed interest in the history of witchcraft following in the distant footsteps of Michelet. Le Roy Ladurie's study, which is written in the most sober of scholarly styles, is centered on a long poem published in Occitan in 1840 and based on a story that had been in oral circulation for some six generations. The all's-well-that-ends-well story involves a case of witchcraft that, just in time, turned out to have been orchestrated by a jealous lover. Le Roy Ladurie uses ancillary archival information to establish that the events described in Jasmin's story probably took place at the end of the seventeenth century, and then goes on to argue that the incident marked the final stage in attitudes to witchcraft when the fear of witchcraft could be manipulated for private ends.

The details of the historian's interpretation are less interesting here than the why and the how of his use of Jasmin's text. He explains that he chose this poem as a way into the history of attitudes to witchcraft because of its status outside official discourse. It is an account that has emerged "wholly from within the intimate culture of the peasantry," he writes, which was never "contaminated" by judicial stereotypes (the fact that the poem is written in the regional language rather than the state language seems to have enhanced this "uncontaminated" character in the historian's eyes).[32] But if this oral-cum-poetic source liberates the historian from the judiciary's point of view and so offers him a greater chance of accessing the "other side" of

the official record, it is by no means "pure" of all influences and an answer to all historiographical problems. As Le Roy Ladurie himself admits, it is impossible to extricate the evidence about seventeenth-century events and attitudes from the intermediate oral tradition that continued to relate the story (and, one could add, from Jasmin's reworking of this tradition, though the historian says little on the particularities of the text).[33] The poem gives some evidence about attitudes to witchcraft in the seventeenth century, in short, but this evidence is irrevocably embedded in ("contaminated" by) a story told over several generations and now written up in poetic form. This indebtedness is reflected in the very title of the work: where Michelet wrote of "the witch" *tout court*, Le Roy Ladurie's topic is *la sorcière de Jasmin*. His choice of this particular source thus implies the "faute de mieux" principle that I discussed in relation to the acceptance of Scott's novels in Chapter 1. In choosing such a source, the historian implies that those who study the past have to live with something less than certainty, but that an uncertain discourse may still be better than silence. It involves a "making do" rather than an "anything goes."

Despite these limitations, and arguably as a way of trying to overcome them, Le Roy Ladurie opts to reproduce his source text in its entirety, both in French translation and in the original Occitan, the latter in facsimile form. In this way, the source text is salvaged and recirculated. It is cited as an element in historical discourse, and re-cited minstrel fashion as of interest in its own right, bearing information in excess of the particular argument the historian is making. Le Roy Ladurie followed a similar procedure in a comparable work published three years earlier: *L'argent, l'amour et la mort en pays d'oc* (1980) is also focused on an Occitan text, this time a novel written by the Abbé Fabre in 1756, and contains not only a reprint of the original novel but also a French translation of it, and, by way of an appendix, another French translation of the second edition. In each case, the reproduction of the original text in toto underscores his own conscientiousness as a "sober" scholar. Philippe Carrard sees this record-breaking comprehensiveness as a strategy to enhance Le Roy Ladurie's authority in face of criticism of his earlier works on the grounds that they were insufficiently documented.[34] Be this as it may, the reproduction of the literary sources has the added effect of giving a certain narrative interest to the history, albeit one that is located in the sources rather than in the historian's commentary on them. Most important here, it also has the added effect of granting the sources a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the historian and of emphasizing the gap between his commentary and the source text that the commentary does not exhaust. As Le Roy Ladurie himself puts it with reference to Fabre's novel, the source text is an arbitrarily chosen point of departure, "a runway" allowing the historian to set off towards further explorations of

peasant culture.[35] But all routes ultimately lead back to the same—nonexpendable—text and to its enigmas: "This examination of the archives brings the historian back again to the text of the narrative itself, which certainly contains its share of oddities."[36] Roland Barthes's description of the literary text as being fixed and yet endlessly significant ("emphatiquement signifiant, mais finalement jamais signifié") seems applicable here.[37] Displayed in Le Roy Ladurie's histories as concrete and finite literary artifacts, the narratives of Jasmin and Fabre evoke the past reality in which they originated at the same time as they continue to point to its relative inaccessibility.

In Le Roy Ladurie's work, the enigmatic textuality of the sources becomes evident in the ways I have been describing above. But it would be wrong to suggest that this awareness of enigmas predominates over the historian's obvious commitment to deciphering, if not indeed exhausting, his sources and to producing a well-supported argument about the development of peasant culture. To the extent that Le Roy Ladurie thus adheres to the goal of producing a single argument from an authoritative point of view, his work belongs to what Frank Ankersmit sees as the modernist paradigm in historical writing.[38] To the extent that Le Roy Ladurie's attempt to carry out this goal ends up by drawing attention to the autonomy and nonexpendability of his sources, however, his writing can be said to exemplify the difficulties inherent in any such attempt to impose a unified point of view on historical materials, a point I discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

The second example from recent practice that I want to consider here is Natalie Zemon Davis's *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (1995), a work that is more "postmodernist" in conception than *La sorcière de Jasmin.* In the first instance, I mean by this that Davis's work is premised on the idea that it is impossible, and perhaps also undesirable, to produce a single argument about the past from a single authoritative point of view; that it is still worthwhile to write history, but that alternative discursive models and strategies are called for. In this sense, the principle of imperfection I have been describing here seems to be incorporated into the very conception of the work.

Like Thierry's *Récits, Women on the Margins* is composed of loosely analogous stories rather than of a single narrative. Recalling Carlyle's definition of history as "the essence of innumerable biographies," Davis's stories focus on the lives of three women who lived socially and/or geographically on the margins of their society and who, at one point in their lives, took decisions that radically altered their course: the Jewish businesswomen Glikl bas Judah Leib; Marie de l'Incarnation, a nun working as a missionary in Canada; Maria Sibylla Merian, naturalist and illustrator. Instead of the traditional preface, Davis's account of these dead women's lives is preceded

by an openly fictional dialogue in which the historian and the three women conduct an imaginary conversation about the nature of the reconstruction that follows—an experimental beginning in which fiction is used, not to create an illusion of the presence of the past, but to draw attention to the historian's awareness of its alterity and to the difficulties involved in accessing it.[39] To the extent that this dialogue is openly fictional (it is based on an impossible physical encounter between the twentieth-century historian and these long-gone women), it can be said to respect the generic convention whereby historians do not automatically have the freedom to invent. At the same time, it indicates a self-reflexive shift away from the "past itself" toward the activity of representing that past: the coherence of the historical text is grounded in the historian's dealing with the past more than in the multiple biographies being represented.

"At one time they were flesh and blood," Davis writes, "then, what was left were memories, portraits, their writings, and their art."[40] Glikl bas Judah Leib wrote an autobiography for her children, Marie de l'Incarnation wrote educational works in the Huron language as well as many letters to her son which he subsequently published, and Maria Sibylla Merian left among other traces a well-known pictorial study of the insects of Surinam. Davis uses these verbal and pictorial artifacts as sources of information about their ideas and the motivations that brought them to make the choices they did, and as sources of information about the peripheral areas of seventeenth-century European culture. In particular, she is concerned with identifying those points where their texts seem to indicate a "restlessness" or lack of satisfaction with the social system within which they were trying to operate. Thus, like Le Roy Ladurie, who looks for sources that fall outside the socially dominant discourse, she considers the texts she is dealing with, written as they were by women who were not representatives of official culture, "as opening fissures in the ground of argument for European domination" (184).[41] In Davis's case, however, the seventeenth-century writings and images are deployed not just as supporting evidence but as the focus of what one could call "the genesis of ignorance" (on the model of Kermode's "genesis of secrecy").[42] I mean by this the fact that Davis regularly isolates those aspects of her sources that seem to suggest that there was more going on "in reality" than was actually recorded in the text; that there is something lying beyond the source whose existence it is important to acknowledge even if the latter-day interpreter can approach it only in a speculative way.

Particularly striking in this regard is her interest in the fictional stories with which Glikl peppered her autobiography, and of which the historian says that "they raise as many questions as they answer" (55); that they were intended "to provoke questioning among her readers—provoke them to

go beyond her own brief commentary to wonderment and debate" (59). Apparently in keeping with this function, Davis re-cites a number of Glikl's stories at strategic moments. Thus the section on Glikl begins with an enigmatic story about the relations between generations, a story Davis admits is not fathomable, and ends with an equally enigmatic vision that Davis simply paraphrases and makes no attempt to gloss. If anything, she heightens its mysteriousness by emphasizing the fact that it was the last entry in the autobiography and thus ostensibly Glikl's "final words":

> The last entry in Glikl's seventh book is dated 1719. It records a vision by a woman, probably Glikl herself, as she washes dishes one evening along the banks of the Moselle River. The night sky opens strangely and grows light as day; sparks (kabbalistic sparks?) fly across the heavens, and then abruptly all is dark. "May God grant that this be for the Good," says Glikl bas Judah Leib, and ends her autobiography.

In a similar way, the historian interprets the drawings and commentaries of Maria Sybilla Merian so as to highlight the possibility that there is more going on in them than meets the eye. Merian included in her study of the insects and plants of Surinam, for example, some details that suggest that she had gathered information from local slaves about the medicinal uses of plants. The most telling detail in this regard is an illustration of ant-eating spiders, of whom Merian wrote that when they could not find any ants they would eat hummingbirds. As Davis points out in her commentary on this drawing-cum-commentary, Merian could not have got the idea of a bird-eating spider from direct observation, but only from the local storytelling tradition where the spider is a central figure. The visual detail together with Merian's commentary thus suggests that she had perhaps more contact with the slave culture than she recorded directly: "How much [she] actually learned of the ritual practices of the Caribs and Africans we do not know" (197). Having thus identified a "fissure" in the evidence, Davis herself goes on to imagine—with some nimble interpretive work, and with lots of perhapses and maybes—what a slave women's perspective on Merian and her drawings, and even on the paintings of one of her pupils, *might* have been. These imaginings have the status of historical hypotheses that can never be proved or disproved because of the lack of information. In this way, Davis repeatedly points to the fact that beyond the margins exemplified by her three women, there is yet another perspective, a perspective that can be imagined but probably never known. The idea that the sources not only provide knowledge but also point toward what we do not know is reiterated in the final lines of the section on Merian, where Davis comments on the change in the frontispiece to the second edition of Merian's mag-

num opus: "Perhaps the choice reflected Merian's own disquiet... at placing her book at the centre of an imperial enterprise. Once again Merian takes her own flight. Once again we cannot pin the woman down" (202). This escape recalls Carlyle's farewell to the Abbot Samson, "The magnanimous Abbot makes preparation for departure; departs, and—," and Michelet's farewell to his witch, "As she left, she laughed... and then disappeared like an arrow.—One would like to know, but one can never know, what became of her."[43]

In their stubborn textuality, the sources as they are displayed in Davis's text provide a fixed reference point to which the inquirer keeps returning as well as a springboard or "runway" from which to imagine the (un)known world that produced them. As such, the sources are instruments in presenting the unpresentable and hence evoking the historical sublime. Picking up on Wellek's association between historicism and aesthetics, we can see this self-reflexive going beyond, and returning to, the source as both a cognitive activity (directed toward an understanding of the past and our dealings with it) and an aesthetic one (involving reflection on the nature of history and the elusiveness of the past). Davis's invocation of the historical sublime—her invitation to imagine the *échappée* of her history—is indeed arguably linked to an attempt to reconceive creatively both the form and the function of historical writing in light of new insights into the situatedness of historical knowledge and its limits. Her work seems designed not only to produce positive insights into the seventeenth century and more generally into social marginality (and this is an important part of the work), but also to establish an *ethical* relationship with the past. This is not to say that she provides sociopolitical lessons on the basis of information regarding past events and their place within some larger scheme of things. Instead, Davis seems to use the aesthetic potential of her material to stimulate empathy with respect to actors in the past and a commitment to the principle of commemorating them, even if the details of their lives can never be known. A similar commitment underlies many contemporary appeals to the historical "experience" of certain groups as the foundation of a latter-day collective identity, just as it underlay much of the nineteenth-century work I have been considering here. Reflecting on recent historiographical developments, Ankersmit notes that "the new forms of historical writing also want to give us an idea of 'what it was like' to live in a certain period in the past.... they do not primarily want to convey a (coherent) knowledge of the past that can only estrange us from experience, but rather impart to the reader an 'experience' of the past that is as direct and immediate as the historian's language may permit."[44] As my discussion so far has indicated, there are indeed important continuities between romantic historicism and some contemporary historical writing as far as

the interest in the experience of "people like ourselves" is concerned. Indeed, the current popularity of cultural history is closely linked to the idea that the function of history as such should be to allow identification with our fellows in the past, while simultaneously recognizing their difference. Ankersmit, in describing recent attempts to give contemporary readers an experience of the past, does not elaborate on the discursive mechanics through which this sense of participating in past experience is created (beyond his proviso "as direct and immediate as the historian's language may permit" and his use of quotation marks around "experience"). His brevity on this point is surprising, given the linguistic turn's insistence that the past can never be directly experienced and that experience itself is something mediated by language.[45] As I have been suggesting here, the subjective sense of "unmediated" contact with the past may in part be constructed by the strategic use of literary texts, both as actual relics of the past that can be reproduced in the present and as sources-cum-springboards for the imagination.

Varieties of History

The current preoccupation of historians with representing both the past as they know it and the *échappée* as they imagine it can be seen as a response to one of the inherent and as yet unresolved problems of historicism—already discussed in somewhat different terms by Carlyle. I mean the difficulty of reducing the wealth of local histories to some "Great Story" or "Idea of the Whole" in light of the fact that there is always another aspect of the past that might also be taken speculatively into account although it may not be accessible to research. To a certain extent, the "unknown immensity" of the past, to recall Certeau's phrase, plays the role of an alternative albeit negative framework within which individual biographies are placed. Whatever significance those biographies now have may change if and when more of the *echappée* is recuperated.

It is worth noting at this point that at least one reviewer saw Davis's book as rather unfocused, but as having the merit of drawing attention to unknown women and the similarities between them and opening up doors for further explorations: "By pursuing leads in her copious endnotes . . . students and scholars will be able to undertake explorations of physical, intellectual, and psychological *terrae* that, thanks to Davis, are no longer virtually *incognitae*."[46] In other words, the value of Davis's work is seen here, like that of the histories I examined in earlier chapters, in the imminence of yet another history that might be written, in the virtual existence of some alternative. This appreciation provides yet another example of the rest-

lessness of historians in their ramifying fascination with new worlds, a restlessness that I have been describing here as endemic to the historical project introduced with romantic historicism and that I have been linking both to changing patterns of relevance and to the aesthetics of historical writing. Much recent history has existed in the mode of a promise, in the continuous imagining of new histories that might be written. But is "more" history—the discovery of yet more terrae incognitae—the only response to "imperfect" history? Or to put this another way: What long-term modus vivendi is there with the imperfections of historical representation?

Awareness of the impossibility of writing a total, synthetic History from a single point of view while continuing to valorize the uncovering of yet more hidden histories seems to lead logically into renewed reflection on the cultural function of historical writing, in both its academic and its nonacademic forms. What is historical representation good for? Where lies the value of history if it is no longer premised on the reconstructability of some grand narrative encompassing all of the past? What is the point of a historical account whose value lies above all in the alternative history it allows us to imagine? In the light of such questions, a number of recent works have suggested that the next issue to be tackled within historical theory is the "why," rather than the "what," of history writing. "The time has come for us to *think* about the past, rather than to investigate it," Frank Ankersmit concludes his survey of postmodernism in historical writing.[47] His point has recently been echoed by Keith Jenkins in his *Why History? Ethics and Postmodernity,* which concludes that "the only point of studying the past is for what it can mean for us today" and that hence even the term "history" should be replaced by something like "appropriative studies."[48] Behind these calls for renewed reflection on the function of historical writing is the realization that all knowledge of the past is ultimately limited, or to put this another way, that many types of history are conceivable and no particular mode is pregiven.

Creating an imaginative involvement in the lives of past generations is one of the traditional functions of the historical novel in its various forms (in the postmodern variant known as "historiographic metafiction," the emphasis may also have shifted to an ironic reflection on the limits of historical knowledge). It is a moot point whether or not stimulating empathy for (unknown) actors in the past will become a dominant aim of historiography and marginalize other functions—that of offering explanations of social change and judgments of civil conflict, for example. Clearly, the outcome of current reflections on the function of historical writing will not only be dependent on the ways in which historians conceive of their own task as scholars, but it will also depend on how they perceive the relationship of their scholarship to the public at large and to the other cultural

forms in which the past is represented. In any case, my argument here suggests that if history writers swing too far in emphasizing the limits of their powers to know and represent the past, they risk not only becoming discouraged themselves but undercutting their claim to be representing anything at all. In other words, there are inevitably limits to the extent to which writers of history can draw attention to the tenuousness of their grasp of what lies beyond the grasp of evidence, without undercutting their own claim to be doing their best to represent something outside their own imagination.

If the "appropriation" of the past becomes the mere projection of latter-day interests (and that will tend to become the case when we have only imagination to go on), then the historian has cut off the branch on which he or she is sitting and may well start turning into a moralistic Carlyle. In Chapter 3, I argued that there is a built-in control mechanism in historical representation and that there are limits to our tolerance of imperfection. The "desire for history," the collective engagement with an objectively existing and multifariously accessible historical world, is both the source for the historical sublime and the source of criticism by interested parties. It follows from this that too much dwelling on our ignorance and on the enigmas of the past itself, however meaningful in the short term, also creates in the long term the demand for more certainties. Or, at the very least, it may create a demand for less speculation, for a different set of questions, and for more inquiry into other aspects of the past about which some information may well be available. In this way, the perennial failure to capture the past whets the appetite to try again, if need be revising one's conception of history itself.

The demand for new research or a new type of history can be motivated by scholarly curiosity about hitherto unexplored aspects of the past, by an identification with marginalized groups in the past, or by a desire to compare and if possible reconcile conflicting points of view on socially divisive events.[49] As I have been suggesting here, any attempt to deal with new topics will also involve thinking creatively about the discursive forms suitable for treating them. My analysis also implies that, along with all of these reasons, the demand for more research into the past may also be partly motivated on purely aesthetic grounds by the desire for defamiliarization. The investigation of new territory can yield surprises (both Scott and Ranke knew that truth is stranger than fiction), and so liberate us from having to rely on the fairly predictable products of our own imagination in filling in the *échappée* left by other historians. In any case, any future reconsiderations of the functions of historical representation will have to take into account this aesthetic potential and the way in which it may be exploited, both in its own right and/or in the service of socially relevant messages.

A Postscript, Which Could Have Been a Preface

> It is a general custom . . . to begin with the last chapter of a work; so that, after all, these remarks, being introduced last in order, have still the best chance to be read in their proper place.
>
> —W. Scott, *Waverley* (1814)

This book may well be accused of anachronistically turning nineteenth-century historians into our contemporaries and our contemporaries into romantics. So I want to close by addressing briefly a number of issues relating to "history" and "theory" as envisaged in this study. Have I not projected my present concerns onto the past and projected my historical interests onto my theoretical discussion?

To begin with the historical dimension of this study. It is undoubtedly true that my discussions of historical representation at the close of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth have been facilitated by the fact that the "peripheral, blurred area between fiction and history" has been brought close to the center of contemporary historiographical debate (to recall the words of Carlo Ginzburg with which I started). My contemporary awareness of the existence of a "blurred area" in contemporary theory and practice fed into my investigation of the topology of this blurred area at the earlier period. But this *Vorurteil,* in the Gadamerian sense, has made visible new sets of relations between discursive phenomena that have hitherto been treated more or less in isolation. My analysis of the relations between historical and fictional writing in the earlier period also casts some fresh light on the nature and origins of some contemporary debates, providing a corrective to the amnesia that has so often characterized recent "new history" and to the ahistorical approach which has often characterized historical theory. This amnesia has meant that necessary connections are sometimes assumed to exist between phenomena that may in fact be only historically related, and this limits, of course, the number of alternatives that can be envisaged for the future. The important question to ask, then, is not so much whether I have modernized Scott and his contemporaries, since a point of view is a necessary feature of historical understanding, but whether I have offered sufficient evidence to convince you of the validity of my arguments.

To the extent that this is a historical study, it is best seen as an analysis of a limited set of discursive practices in the light of a number of related theoretical issues. It is neither an exhaustive account of the relations between fictional writing and historical representation in a given period nor an attempt to reduce the history of historical representation to a single narrative. This remark applies not only to the treatment of the earlier period but

also to the implied continuity between romantic historicism and contemporary historiographical practice. My purpose has not been to announce triumphantly that contemporary concerns are in fact "old hat" and that the romantics discovered "postmodernism" ("all roads, as it were, lead to the present and the present is the best thing that could ever have happened"). Instead, what I have tried to do is point out certain continuities in the preoccupations of historians in the romantic period and those of some contemporary historians. These continuities can be explained partly as a matter of an ongoing if tenuous discursive tradition. Using the Russian Formalist model of literary dynamics, we can say that certain preoccupations moved briefly to the center of the historical culture, then to the periphery where they persisted in incidental writings, and are arguably back in the center again. From our contemporary vantage point in which these concerns are prominent, we can now retrospectively see that some winding roads lead back to romantic historicism and perhaps even further. The history of historiography, like every other history, is constantly subject to such retrospective revisions.

The continuities between romantic historiography and contemporary practice can also be explained, however, in terms of the nature of historical representation as such and the challenges offered to the historical writer by documentary scarcity and excess. These challenges occur in a particularly aggravated form in the case of cultural history, and they have occurred, therefore, in a particularly aggravated form in the historiographical project that came with romantic historicism and the historical novel and is still being worked on today. As I have been arguing at various points, this was an "impossible" project based on the idea of representing a socially relevant past with which we could empathize, a past located above all in the cultural sphere and in the *échappée* of earlier histories. As I argued in particular in Chapter 2, this historical project has created a structural gap between relevance and representability that has left the historian chronically dissatisfied and history chronically imperfect. Whereas Edward Gibbon could lay down his pen with a sense of satisfaction at having finished his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, subsequent historiography has been perennially incomplete. But if these challenges occur in aggravated form in the case of cultural history, they can also be seen—and here we reach the theoretical dimension of this study—as endemic to historical representation and as one of the features that can be used to distinguish it theoretically from fiction as such.

The theory of historiography has often been accused of irrelevance with respect to historiographical practice. In the preceding chapters I have tried to avoid this pitfall by elaborating on a number of theoretical issues through the detailed analysis of particular attempts to represent the past. Behind

this way of proceeding is the conviction not only that the complexities of practice should be accounted for as far as possible in any theory, but that it is only by hitting theory off against practice and vice versa that it is possible to broaden our understanding of the actual conditions in which historical writing is practiced and of the theoretical possibilities available for practicing it at different times in different ways. Reflecting this methodological parti pris, but I hope not merely using my object of research to mirror it, I have been attempting to take into theoretical account the "imperfections" of practice. If I have overemphasized shortcomings here at the cost of downplaying achievement, I believe this is justified by the ongoing need to counteract the widespread assumption that cultural products, and especially works of high culture, are always successful in whatever they set out to do.

The principle of imperfection has made it possible to develop a theory of historical representation that accounts nonreductively for the complexity of the interrelations between fictionality, literarity, aesthetics, historiography, and novel writing. An awareness of these complexities is not just of theoretical importance in adding to our understanding of the history of cultural forms. In the future (for I too find myself ending with a look forward to another history), it should also contribute to our gaining a better insight into the range of functions that historical representation in its various manifestations fulfills for different groups at different points of their social development: from empathy with "men like ourselves," to recall Thierry's phrase, to ethical and political lessons about social behavior, to aesthetic pleasures, to mixtures of all of these. Finally, it is to be hoped that the sort of distinctions I have been making here will contribute in practice to the development of sharper critical tools with which to respond to histories, both professional and popular, on that dialogic basis that is characteristic, in theory at least, of historical representation.

Appendix

Reviews of Scott's novels referred to in the text. Since the reviews were published anonymously, they are listed here in alphabetical order according to the title of the journal. The names of the authors, wherever known, have been included in parenthesis.

1. Reviews of *Old Mortality* (Tales of My Landlord, first series) (1816)

Annales politiques, morales et littéraires (24 July 1817): 1–4.
Archives philosophiques, politiques et littéraires 2 (1817): 24–54.
British Critic (January 1817) second series, 7: 73–97.
British Lady's Magazine 25 (1 January 1817): 94–101.
British Review and London Critical Journal 9 (1817): 184–204.
Critical Review (December 1816) fifth series, 4: 614–25. [Reprinted in Hayden, *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, 101–12.]
Eclectic Review (April 1817): 309–36 [J. Conder].
Edinburgh Christian Instructor 14 (January 1817) 41–73; (February 1817) 100–40; (March 1817) 170–201. [Republished as monograph; *see* Thomas M'Crie Sr.]
Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal 28 (March–August 1817): 193–259 [F. Jeffrey].
Journal des débats politiques et littéraires (28 November 1817) [C. Nodier].
Monthly Magazine (1 January 1817): 546.
Monthly Review; or Literary Journal, Enlarged 82 (April 1817): 383–91.
New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register 6 (July–December 1816): 533–34.

North American and Miscellaneous Review 5 (1817): 257–86 [J. G. Palfrey].
Quarterly Review 16 (January 1817): 430–80 [W. Scott, J. Erskine, W. Gifford]. [Reprinted in Hayden, *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, 113–43.]
Scots Magazine, and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany; Being a General Repository of Literature, History, and Politics 78 (1816): 928–34.

2. Reviews of *Waverley* (1814)

Antijacobin Review, and True Churchman's Magazine; or, Monthly, Political, and Literary Censor 47 (September 1814): 217–47 [pagination eccentric].
British Critic new series 2 (August 1814): 189–211. [Reprinted in Hayden, *Scott: The Critical Heritage*, 67–74].
Monthly Review or Literary Journal, Enlarged 75 (November 1814): 275–89 [J. Merivale].
Quarterly Review 11 (July 1814): 354–77 [J. W. Croker].
Scots Magazine, and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany; Being a General Repository of Literature, History, and Politics 76 (1814): 524–33.

3. Reviews of *Ivanhoe* (1819)

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 6 (October 1819–March 1820): 262–72.
British Review, and London Critical Journal 15 (1820): 393–454.
Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal 33 (January–May 1829): 1–54.
Lady's Monthly Museum; or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction; being an Assemblage of Whatever can Tend to Please the Fancy, Interest the Mind, or Exalt the Character of The British Fair 11 (1820): 97–101.
Literary Gazette; and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, etc. for the Year 1819 (25 December 1819): 817–23.
London Magazine 1 (January-June 1820): 79–84 [J. Scott].
Monthly Magazine; or British Register (February–July 1820): 71.

Notes

Introduction

1. On the general interest of taking "secondary" features like digressions into theoretical account, see Nemoianu, *A Theory of the Secondary.*

2. On the ongoing legacy of romantic historicism with regard to our awareness of the alterity of the past, see also Chandler, *England in 1819.*

3. As Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob put this in their *Telling the Truth about History,* historical inquiry is premised on the existence of a past "out there": "Beyond the self—outside the realm of the imagination—lies a landscape cluttered with the detritus of past living, a melange of clues and codes informative of a moment as real as this present one. When curiosity has been stirred about an aspect of this past, a relationship with an object has begun" (259). Positing the "objectivity" of events with respect to those who seek to know them "after the fact" is not to deny the role of latter-day experience in mediating our views of the past. Nor is it to deny the subjective and mediated dimension of past events as these are experienced and interpreted by contemporaries; that the participants' interpretation of what is going on around them is an integral part of events is illustrated in Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution,* 19–51.

4. Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 79, 42–43. Cathy Caruth, placing traumatic experience at the center of her theory of representation, writes of the relationship of inaccessibility between experience and representation (a "history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence"). *Unclaimed Experience*, 18.

5. Hans Blumenberg's definition of reality as "that which cannot be mastered by the self" seems appropriate here. "The Concept of Reality and the Possibility of the Novel," 34.

6. Lyotard, "Presenting the Unpresentable"; also his more extensive critique of traditional notions of representation in "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?"

7. Gossman, *Between History and Literature,* 307. Notable exceptions to this emphasis on isolated historiographical works are B. G. Smith's *The Gender of History,* which rewrites the history of historiography since the early nineteenth century from the perspective of marginalized amateurs, and Philippe Carrard's *Poetics of the New History,* which examines the nuts-and-bolts of the Annales school of historiography.

8. Ginzburg, "Checking the Evidence," 87.

9. White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," 42. See also his references in *Metahistory* to the "fictive element" in history writing and to its "fictive character" (1, 3n); also the title of his essay "The Fictions of Factual Representation."

10. Illustrating the topicality of the concern with fiction: Certeau, "Histoire, science et fiction"; N. Davis, "Du conte et de l'histoire"; Ginzburg, "Montrer et citer," "Proofs and Possibilities"; Jauss, "L'usage de la fiction en histoire"; Pomian, "Histoire et fiction." The journal *Le débat* also devoted special attention to the phenomenon of *the-historian-turned-novelist* (nos. 54 & 56, 1989), publishing interviews with David Landes, Jean Levi, Hubert Monteilhet, among others. I have discussed the particular confusions surrounding the term "fiction" in my "Semantic Slides: History and the Concept of Fiction." Illustrative of the way in which one meaning of "fiction" slides into the next is Simon Schama's "Afterword" to his experimental work *Dead Certainties*: "Though these stories may at times appear to observe the discursive conventions of history, they are in fact historical novellas, since some passages (the soldier with Wolfe's army, for example) are pure inventions, based, however, on what documents suggest. This is not to say, I should emphasize, that I scorn the boundary between fact and fiction. It is merely to imply that even in the most austere scholarly report from the archives, the inventive faculty—selecting, pruning, editing, commenting, interpreting, delivering judgements—is in full play"(322). Schama's argument here slides confusingly from an admission of the historian's inventive faculty (fiction as construction) to "invention," to "novels."

11. Nancy Partner distinguishes between what she calls the "primary" meaning of fiction (the "creation of form in language") and its secondary meaning (the "invention or imaginary descriptions of events and persons"). "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," 24, 33. Using the term in its "primary" meaning, Natalie Zemon Davis for one has openly qualified her work in *The Return of Martin Guerre* as fictional, but in doing so insisted on the fact that this term is to be understood in a neutral way, as basically synonymous with "auctorial action;" "Du conte et de l'histoire," 140. This point is reiterated in the introduction to her *Fiction in the Archives:* "By 'fictional' I do not mean their feigned elements, but rather, using the other and broader sense of the root word *fingere,* their forming, shaping, and molding elements: the crafting of a narrative" (3).

12. The phrase "inverted positivism" originates in Ginzburg's "Checking the Evidence," 83. Illustrative of the mechanism involved is Jerald Combs's warning to his readers that a lack of consensus in the interpretation of U.S. diplomatic history does not imply that "history is indeed only a fiction temporarily agreed upon." *American Diplomatic History,* xi (quoted in Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story,* 46).

13. Gertrude Himmelfarb's article "Telling It As You Like It" exemplifies the way in which the fuzziness surrounding the term fiction can foreclose debate. The term "fiction," which is scattered throughout her polemic, is used together with "postmodernism"

as a sort of catchword to indicate a variety of diseases to which she believes the historical discipline to be currently prone: a lack of concern for conscientious archival research; the invention of characters and incidents; a penchant for novel writing; trivialization; an overemphasis on creativity and imagination; political partiality; a refusal to believe that "history itself is something other than a fictional, rhetorical, literary, aesthetic creation of the historian." Indeed, Himmelfarb could be said to slide semantically along the same route as Schama, but in the opposite direction. She starts with the purported identification of history with fiction in the sense of "novels," an extremely reductive position ascribed to postmodernists, which leads her to downplay, if not dismiss, the inventive faculty and the role of subjective prejudices in the genesis of a historical work. Himmelfarb is herself guilty of eliding the differences between novels and historiography in her use of the term "historiographic metafiction" with reference to historiography, since this term was developed by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (105–23) to describe a particular type of historical *novel* that she sees as characteristic of postmodernism.

14. The lock-stock-and-barrel approach of literary scholars is illustrated, for example, by the way in which Monika Fludernik's *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction* moves unquestioningly between "fiction" in the general sense of "representation" and "fiction" in the more restrictive sense of narrative texts inviting a make-believe attitude. In her *Towards a "Natural" Narratology,* she does distinguish between the "fictive" and the "fictional" (41), but then effectively ignores this distinction in proceeding to equate narrativity with the fictional. In a similar way, Ruth Ronen's *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* slides between a general concept of fiction as "any manipulation of facts (narrativization, selection, expansion and condensation of materials)" (76) and a more restricted concept of fiction that sees it as synonymous with literary prose narrative based on make-believe.

15. One of the cultural effects of fiction, as a theoretical concept and as praxis, is to stimulate debates on the limits of our access to truth. According to Michael Wood's introduction to Gill and Wiseman's *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, "[T]he interrogation of truthful and untruthful lies, the testing of non-literal ways of representing and misrepresenting knowledge," may be among the deepest and most necessary habits of Western culture, which has needed "alongside its capacity to distinguish truth from lies, a ground where such matters could not be quickly settled either way" (xviii). On the fact that "history" has traditionally been defined in its opposition to the fictional, see Certeau, "L'histoire, science et fiction," 19.

16. "People keep asking for novels. Why don't they look more closely at history? There you can find human life, private life with its varied and dramatic scenes, the human heart with its heated and its quiet passions, and on top of all of that, an overriding charm, the sovereign charm of reality." Guizot, *L'amour dans le mariage,* 1.

17. On the appreciation of "the real" for its own sake, see Barthes's "L'effet de réel." On the indirect character of experience in the mediatized world, see Lasch, *The Minimal Self,* 133.

18. Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* no. 1394, 134.

19. On the concept of defamiliarization, see Shklovksy, "Art as Technique."

20. W. Scott, *Waverley,* 493.

21. "Bei der Vergleichung überzeugte ich mich, daß das historisch Überlieferte selbst schöner und jedenfalls interessanter sei, als die romantische Fiction." Ranke, *Zur eigenen Lebensgerschichte,* 61; also quoted in Grafton, *The Footnote,* 38.

22. Hanawalt and White, review of *Dead Certainties,* 123.

1. Hybriditiy

1. On the background to the erection of the stone monument to Helen Walker, see note 75. For a description of these stones, see Crockett, *The Scott Country* and, especially, *The Scott Originals,* 234–38 (Helen Walker); 137–40 (Andrew Gemmels); 170–81 (Robert Paterson). A monument to David Ritchie, "the original of the 'Black Dwarf,'" is also discussed (140–61). Although Scott insisted that the figure of "Dandie Dinmont" in *Guy Mannering* was not based on any single figure (see ibid., 53–63, and Scott's comments in the *Quarterly Review*, 117 [see Appendix]), a number of "prototypes" were identified, chief among them "James Davidson," whose name on the family gravestone in Oxnam is accompanied in parenthesis by the name "Dandie Dinmont" (Borders Family History Society, *Roxburghshire Monumental Inscriptions 8: Oxnam*).

2. Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel* (page references in the text).

3. Manzoni did allow for speculative statements within the overarching framework of the historian's nonfictional discourse as long as their speculative character was clearly indicated. See Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, 74–75; Ginzburg, "Proofs and Possibilities," 123.

4. Fehrenbacher, Letter to the Editor regarding Gore Vidal's *Lincoln*.

5. Dorrit Cohn's "Reflections on the Historical Novel" again works toward the conclusion that the historical novel should be assigned to "the fiction side of the great divide". *The Distinction of Fiction,* 162.

6. Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature,* 112–13.

7. On the concept of "fictional world," see Pavel, *Fictional Worlds;* Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory;* Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory;* Doležel, *Heterocosmica*.

8. According to Pavel, it is precisely because a fictional world is distanced from reality that it may become relevant to our interpretation of the latter: it functions as a sort of allegorical model with which to interpret the world as we know it; see Pavel's discussion of the principles of distance and relevance, *Fictional Worlds,* 145.

9. Pragmatic approaches to fictionality can be found in Lamarque, *Fictional Points of View* (here the emphasis is on the imaginative involvement in worlds known to be invented); Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (here the emphasis is similarly on an imaginative recentering on an alternative world); and, most influentially, Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (where the emphasis is on ludic make-believe). Others have examined the relationship between ludic make-believe and related attitudes from a historical perspective: Gill and Wiseman, *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World;* Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages;* Nelson, *Fact or Fiction;* Assmann, *Die Legitimität der Fiktion;* L. Davis, *Factual Fictions;* Zelter, *Sinnhafte Fiktion und Wahrheit.* In his *Die Selbstorganisation des Sozialsystems Literatur* Siegfried Schmidt provides a rather Whiggish account of the emergence of modern literary institutions at the end of the eighteenth century that subsumes fictionality into "the aesthetic convention" characteristic of the newly formed autonomous field of literature: as he presents it, fiction was gradually "liberated" as an imaginative space for ludic reflection from other, more practically oriented discourses and from the principle of verisimilitude. The genre of the historical novel, according to my analysis, implies that the various forms of fictional attitude have persisted alongside the full-blown form described by Schmidt.

10. The idea of "immersion" is explicitly invoked by Marie-Laure Ryan, for example, in her *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory,* 21, 22. In a rare

deviation from the idea of immersion, Robert Newsom characterizes fictionality by a duality of perspective (the reader or viewer has one mental leg in the imaginary world and the other in the actual world) (*A Likely Story*).

11. Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory,* 143.

12. For the expression "l'histoire vue en déshabillé," see Balzac, *Une ténébreuse affaire,* in *La comédie humaine,* 5:508.

13. Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages,* 238.

14. Robert Rosenstone's comments on the historical novel are applicable here: "Any work about the past, be it a piece of written, visual, or oral history, enters a body of pre-existing knowledge and debate" (*Visions of the Past,* 128). The lack of autonomy of historical fictions is also underscored by Linda Hutcheon, who describes the historical novel as "modelled on historiography to the extent that it is motivated and made operative by a notion of history as a shaping force (in the narrative and in human destiny)" (*A Poetics of Postmodernism,* 113).

15. Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction,* especially 30, 49. Shaw presupposes that historical novels, with the exception of *War and Peace,* are flawed from an aesthetic point of view (a judgment he never justifies); he then concludes that this artistic failure is due to the difficulties involved in trying to develop characters fully while also giving insight into historical processes. In an early defense of the genre, Herbert Butterfield (*The Historical Novel*) presented the historical novel as an alternative way of dealing with the past and as having a legitimate role to play alongside historiography.

16. The fashion for historical novels can be deduced from passing references to their popularity, as in Th. Lister's 1847 assessment of the Waverley novels. It is borne out by surveys of novelistic production and sales in the period 1820–40: see for example Tippkötter, *Walter Scott,* 9–18; M. Lyons, "Les best-sellers," 388; Maigron, *Le roman historique à l'époque romantique,* iv-v, 99–133; Eke and Steineke, *Geschichten aus (der) Geschichte,* 8–9. Manzoni's idea that the success of the historical novel was merely incidental was to be reiterated by Louis Maigron in 1898, when he described the sudden rise and fall of the genre and predicted that its future renaissance remained "fort problématique, pour ne pas dire, impossible." *Le roman historique à l'époque romantique,* iv-v.

17. This view of the evolution of genre from the center to the periphery and back again is based on the theoretical model of literary history developed by the Russian Formalists; see Tynjanov, "On Literary Evolution"; also Erlich, *Russian Formalism,* especially 159–60. For a succinct account of the transformation of the historical novel as a genre, see Wesseling, *Writing History as a Prophet,* 5–58. As recently as 1983, Shaw introduced the historical novel as a "form which suffers from neglect and contempt." *The Forms of Historical Fiction,* 9. Lowenthal's *Possessed by the Past* gives a critical account of the expansion of the heritage industry and its implications.

18. On the postmodernist historical novel, see Wesseling, *Writing History as a Prophet,* and Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism,* 105–23. On reflexivity with respect to the border between the factual and the fiction as a central theme of postmodernism, see Currie, *Metafiction;* also McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction,* and Nicholls, *Blurred Boundaries.*

19. The necessity of dealing with hybridity as a central issue has also been signaled by Alvin Kernan: "[T]he problematic relationship between stories and actuality is perhaps the central issue with which any theory of fiction must deal." Kernan, Brooks, and Holquist, *Man and His Fictions,* 5.

20. In identifying Scott as the initiator of the genre, I am not suggesting that he was the first to write what might justifiably be called a historical novel according to the definition given here. On Scott's precursors, see generally Heirbrant, *Componenten en compositie van de historische roman,* 41–54. As Scott himself admitted, *Waverley* had in part been inspired by the work of at least one other writer, the Irishwoman Maria Edgeworth, with whom he corresponded and even visited; see Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott,* 4:354–57, 7:160–63, 8:22. Scott's novelistic forerunners are discussed in Binkert, *Historische Romane vor Walter Scott;* Buck, *Die Vorgeschichte des historischen Romans;* Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority,* 19–78. His affinities with the gothic novel tradition are discussed in Robertson, *Legitimate Histories.* For the background to *Waverley* in Scott's own poetic writings, see Millgate, *Walter Scott,* 3–34. On his affinities with Henry Mackenzie, see Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction,* 222. Scott's novels were also rooted in eighteenth-century antiquarianism (see further Chapters 2 and 4 below). The historical novel à la Scott did not initiate the interaction between historical writing and literary genres. It can be seen rather as the culmination of a period of close interaction between historiography and other literary genres; witness Braudy, *Narrative Form in History and Fiction;* J. Levine, *The Battle of the Books;* Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction*; Woolf, "A Feminine Past?"

21. In considering the implied contract between Scott and his readers, it is important to bear in mind the differences between the first editions of the novels and the later Magnum Opus edition (1829–33), to which prefaces, notes, and occasional appendices were added. That the author of "The Waverley Novels" claimed to represent history is implicit in his addressing recognizable periods of history and made explicit in various prefacing statements in which he claimed to have represented the manners of the past (see for example *Waverley,* 492–93). His freedom to invent was invoked in the first editions by a variety of signs that presumably worked in conjunction and, to a certain extent, accumulatively from one novel by the 'author of *Waverley*' to another. Among these are the use of generic labels on the title page or in the preface ("historical romance," "tale," "fictitious narrative"). The *Antiquary,* for example, is introduced in the preface as one of a series of "fictitious narratives"; *Ivanhoe* is given the subtitle "a historical romance," whereas *Tales of My Landlord,* the title used for no less than seven of the novels, suggests an informal, oral narrative with no pretense to truthfulness, and far removed from formal history. Other signals of fictional intent include the invocation of poets, playwrights, and writers of prose fiction in the chapter mottoes (most notably, the reference to Cervantes's trickster Cid Hamete Benengeli as the overarching motto of *Tales of My Landlord*); the use of a narrator-focalizer different from the author and with apparently unlimited access to the minds of characters; the use of multiple narrator-personae and complex stories-within-stories in the paratextual packaging around the main narrative. For a detailed account of the various frames used by Scott, both preceding and following his "coming out" as the "author of *Waverley,*" see Robertson, *Legitimate Histories,* 123–42. On "framing" as an indication of fictional intent, see Cohn, "Signposts of Fictionality," in *The Distinction of Fiction,* 109–31. The duality of purpose described here distinguishes the Waverley novels from the eighteenth-century pseudofactual works discussed by Philip Stewart, *Imitation and Illusion in the French Memoir-Novel,* and L. Davis, *Factual Fictions,* 154–73. According to Zimmerman, one of the most innovatory aspects of Scott's work was the way in which, while presenting history, it also emphasized the fictionality of the novelistic mode. *The Boundaries of Fiction,* 222.

22. Walter Scott, *Old Mortality,* ed. Stevenson and Davidson, ix. This critical judgment is echoed, for example, by Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction,* 205; Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction,* 216–24.

23. The second series of *Tales of My Landlord* comprised *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818); the third series, *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *A Legend of Montrose* (1819); the fourth series, *Castle Dangerous* and *Count Robert of Paris* (1832). Although they were putatively the work of "Jedediah Cleishbotham," the reviews seem to have unanimously identified these novels with the (anonymous) "author of *Waverley*." In the review of *Old Mortality* Scott wrote collaboratively for the *Quarterly Review* in 1817, *Old Mortality* is presumed to have flowed from the same pen as *Waverley.* That Scott (already a renowned poet) was also the "author of *Waverley*" was an open secret, but he formally admitted his authorship only in 1826, after the financial collapse of himself and his publisher. In the first edition of *Old Mortality* the name "Jedediah Cleishbotham" figured on the title page as the alleged editor of a story written down by schoolteacher Pattieson on the basis of a story told by "Old Mortality."

24. Lockhart pointed out that *Old Mortality* represented Scott's first venture into the realm of "history" (as distinct from memory as had been the case in *Waverley*), since Scott was principally dependent on documents for his knowledge of the period. *The Life of Sir Walter Scott,* 5:157–58. As we shall see from the public reactions to the work, however, the interpretation of the events in question was still invested with considerable importance for the direct descendants of those involved in them. The fact that the events in question still belonged to living history—that is, were still capable of arousing passions—is evidenced in the ceremony that took place in June 1815 to commemorate the Covenanters' victory at Drumclog (along with the achievements of William Wallace). This ceremony is described extensively, if tendentiously, by Aiton, *A History of the Rencounter at Drumclog.*

25. Walter Scott, *Old Mortality,* ed. Calder, 200. Unless stated otherwise, all further references will be to this edition and will be given in the text.

26. In analyzing Scott's deviations from evidence, I shall presume that the novelist indeed based his account on the particular sources he subsequently mentioned in his notes; that he was also aware of the principal sources for the period; and that he did not have access to alternative sources of evidence that are no longer extant. To a certain extent, analysis must be speculative, since it is impossible to establish with absolute certainty what Scott had actually read and what he had remembered from his reading. The references included in the notes to the Magnum Opus edition, however, do indicate the range of his reading in the memoirs of the period, as does the extensive collection of memoirs and pamphlets relating to the Covenanters in his library. See [Cochrane], *Catalogue of the Library of Abbotsford,* 72–80. Finally, even if it is impossible to establish what Scott knew at the time of writing, it is possible at least to establish what he could not have known since there is nowhere evidence for it (for example, the incident in which Cornet Grahame approaches the rebels with a white flag or the existence of Henry Morton).

27. In [Jenner's] *Memoirs of the Lord Viscount Dundee* (6) published by an "Officer of the Army" in 1714, it is averred that Cornet Grahame was one of Claverhouse's kinsmen; [Cochrane], *Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford,* mentions two copies of this work. In a note to the Magnum Opus edition Scott specifically mentioned the "Ballad of Bothwell Bridge" as a source in support of the idea that Cornet Grahame was one of Claverhouse's relations, since one of the stanzas suggests that the latter's assiduous pursuit

of the Covenanters was in part motivated by a desire to revenge the death of his kinsman ("But bloody Claver'se swore an oath, / His kinsman's death avenged should be"); see *Old Mortality,* 550. The version of this ballad included by Calder as an appendix to the text reiterates the revenge theme, but without linking this to a familial tie: "But wicked Claver'se swore an oath, / His Cornet's death revenged sud be" (499).

28. Peter Lamarque's account of both real and fictitious individuals as "sets of properties" underlies this analysis of Scott's transformation of evidence *(Fictional Points of View,* 40–54). One of the properties ascribed to Burley by Howie, one of Scott's most frequently cited sources, is that he was lost at sea *(The Scots Worthies,* 622–23); in a Magnum Opus note, Scott admitted his deviation from fact on this point by ascribing to him an "entirely fictitious" return to Scotland (*Old Mortality,* 588).

29. In referring to the probability of certain types of behavior, I am using Marie-Laure Ryan's analysis of the relations between an actual world and its representation, which includes the notion of "taxonomical" compatibility between one world and another, whereby the same type of behavior or the same species of being occurs in both worlds; see *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory,* 31–47. This form of compatibility underlies the idea of "type"; see further below.

30. The problem of distinguishing formally statements that are based on fact from those that are not is something that has long exercised the creativity of writers. In his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697), Pierre Bayle admonished writers to use brackets to distinguish the invented from the true (11:152). In his *Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680), John Bunyan attempted to discriminate *typologically,* with the help of pictures of pointing hands, between what he himself had invented and what had been reported by others; see L. Davis, *Factual Fictions,* 105–6. In his *Quatrevingt-treize* (1874), Victor Hugo also attempted to distinguish between segments of discourse (in this case, the chapters) referring to historical figures/events, and those referring to invented ones; but the distinction breaks down when in book 2, chapter 3, the fictitious Cimourdain meets up with Robespierre, Danton, and Marat in a tavern. A more recent attempt to distinguish typographically between the invented and the factual is to be found in Jonathan Spence's *The Death of Woman Wang* (1978), where the interior monologue ascribed to the historical figure at the center of the narrative is printed in italics.

31. Barthes, "Le discours de l'histoire," 18.

32. Exemplifying the uncertainty of the nonfiction writer, N. Davis speculates: "Who am I, Martin Guerre *might have* asked himself, if another man has lived out the life I left behind.... The original Martin Guerre *may have* come back to repossess his identity, his persona before it was too late." *The Return of Martin Guerre,* 83–84, my emphasis. On this technique, see also Ginzburg, "Proofs and Possibilities."

33. Lamarque, *Fictional Points of View,* 41.

34. Kiernan, "The Covenanters," 65.

35. On the distinction between presentation and representation, see Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?"; the presentation may be seen as corresponding to the intensional meaning of a text, while the representation corresponds to the extension of that meaning to the world at large.

36. As Gauchet puts it, the post-Revolutionary period saw the emergence in the novel of a new "semiotic regime" based on the concepts of exemplarity and representativity, which later spread to other discourses. "Les *Lettres sur l'histoire de France* d'Augustin Thierry," 276. On the centrality of typification to Scott's narrative art, see Lukács, *The Historical Novel,* 50–77. It should be noted that the word *type* has a variety of mean-

ings in nineteenth-century discourses, reflecting the complexity of the possible relations between an individual figure and some social regularity. First, there is the understanding of "type" as the model after which something is made or should be made; thus Nodier defined the type as an exceptional individual who becomes "the representative sign of a conception, a creation, an idea" (*Oeuvres*, 5:49). Second, there is the understanding of "type" as a typical person, exhibiting the qualities characteristic of a particular temperamental or of a particular sociohistorical class; thus Balzac proposed to represent French society with the help of types (see the 1842 preface to *La comédie humaine*, 1:52). For an analysis of the use of typification in the representation of political leaders, see my "Le dernier mot de la Révolution" and *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation*, 103–36. James Chandler has recently linked historicism as such to this new regime of social representation; see *England in 1819*, 155–202.

37. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions."

38. Hamon describes recurrent figures as the principal interpretive guide ("opérateur de lisibilité") in narrative texts. *Le personnel du roman*, 38, and "Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage," 161–62. With respect to the difficulties involved in representing crowds, see also Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation*, 103–70.

39. The way in which the description of manners is embedded in the description of the lives of imaginary characters is illustrated by the following reference to Edith Bellenden's sartorial sense: "[The maid] hastened, and soon returned with a plaid, in which Edith muffled herself so as completely to screen her face, and in part to disguise her person. This was a mode of arranging the plaid very common among the ladies of that century, and the earlier part of the succeeding one; so much so, indeed, that the mode gave tempting facilities for intrigue" (154–55). Edith Bellenden's particular use of the plaid is a fictitious event, but it is one that apparently could have occurred in eighteenth-century Scotland (at least if we are to believe Scott, who invokes Pepys as a source in the Magnum Opus notes).

40. Barante, *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne*, 1:10, 15, 16.

41. Carlyle, "Biography," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 4:51–66. As Bremond defined it, a full-fledged narrative is "a discourse which integrates a sequence of events of human interest into the unity of a single plot." "The Logic of Narrative Possibilities," 390. Where the element of "human interest" tended to be obscured in structuralist accounts of narrative that gave primacy to the element of plot, its importance has been rehabilitated by Monika Fludernik in her recent *Towards a "Natural" Narratology* (though to the possible neglect of plot). According to Zimmerman, Scott was the first writer to integrate individual experience with collective events (*The Boundaries of Fiction*, 221). As I have shown elsewhere (*The Rhetoric of Historical Representation*, 4–5), "narrative history" was defined in the first half of the nineteenth century above all in terms of the detailed depiction of individuals in action.

42. White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *The Content of the Form*, 24. If Scott's representation of collective events in a fully fledged narrative form was innovatory in his own period, it was to become the model for much subsequent historical writing and, more recently, filmmaking. Robert Rosenstone's recent description of "Hollywood history" where events are presented in a story with a beginning-middle-end and "where historical issues are personalized, emotionalized, and dramatized" reads almost like a recipe for a novel by Scott. *Visions of the Past*, 123.

43. Aug. Thierry, "Sur l'histoire d'Écosse, et sur le caractère national des Écossais," in *Dix ans d'études historiques*, 175.

44. Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," 147.

45. I discuss the relationship between fictionality and narrativity at greater length in my "The Point of Stories."

46. On degrees of narrativity, see my "Narrativity and Historical Representation." In a similar recognition of narrativity as a matter of degree rather than of either/or, Paul Ricoeur has argued for the applicability of the concept "quasi-intrigue" to works of historiography. *Temps et Récit,* 1:269ff.

47. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic.*

48. See Tomashevsky, "Thematics," for a concept of "motivation" that is useful in describing the tension between narrativity (based on compositional motivation) and representational value (based on realistic motivation).

49. According to Millgate, Scott was sufficiently uneasy about the ending of the novel to show it for approval to his publisher Ballantyne, whose concern with pleasing the public is mocked (and respected) in the final version of the novel. *Walter Scott,* 128, 210. The irony of the ending echoes Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey,* where the readers "see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity." *The Novels of Jane Austen,* 5:250. On Scott's delicate balancing between irony and naivety in his approach to the past, see Bann, *The Clothing of Clio,* 106.

50. See also Ferris's discussion of this passage within the framework of the literary discussions at the beginning of the nineteenth century. *The Achievement of Literary Authority,* 147–78.

51. White, "The Politics of Historical Representation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," in *The Content of the Form,* 58–82.

52. On Scott's role in the visit of George IV, see Trevor-Roper, "The Invention of Tradition," 29–34; on Scott's building of Abbotsford, see Bann, *The Clothing of Clio,* 93–11. On Scott's European reputation, see, for example, Massmann, *Die Rezeption der historischen Romane Sir Walter Scotts in Frankreich;* Maigron, *Le roman historique à l'époque romantique,* 51–110 ("Ce fut plus qu'un succès: ce fut un engouement" [51]).

53. The fact that reading involves a dynamic interplay between text and reader has been argued from various perspectives in Warning, *Rezeptionsästhetik;* and empirically tested through experimental research in, for example, Zwaan, *Aspects of Literary Comprehension.* For an example of reader research based on historical materials, see Jäger, "Die Wertherwirkung"; Kloek, *Over Werther geschreven.* My analysis of the reception of Scott's work is based on thirteen English-language reviews of *Tales of My Landlord* listed by Hayden in his *Scott: The Critical Heritage.* Added to this are the three French-language reviews listed in Massmann, *Die Rezeption der historischen Romane Sir Walter Scotts.* In focusing on the reception of Scott, I am continuing from a different perspective the work initiated by Massmann, Tippkötter (*Walter Scott*) and more recently Ferris (*The Achievement of Literary Authority*).

54. The one exception is the *North American Review,* which stressed the fact that a work must create a "unified impression" if it is to be instructive, suggesting that this was something Scott had managed to achieve through his use of fiction (258–59).

55. [Conder], *Eclectic Review,* 314.

56. For "fictitious" history, see, for example, *North American Review,* 260, 261. For "sober" history, see, for example, ibid., 285, and *British Review,* 193.

57. The double perspective, which allows a novel to be both invention and representation, recurs throughout the contemporary response to the Waverley novels. Thus

the *Monthly Review*'s comment on *Waverley*: "The frame of the picture is fiction: but the delineation itself is as correct, minute, and spirited a copy of nature as ever came from the hand of an artist" (275). See also T. H. Lister's general comment, in his survey of the Magnum Opus edition, that the narratives corresponded to the truth of history even if they deployed invention: "[T]he classes represented actually exist even if all the specimens do not" (*Edinburgh Review,* 67).

58. On the status of the "romance" and the novel at the time of *Old Mortality,* see Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700–1800;* also Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction,* and with specific reference to Scott, Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority.*

59. Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority,* esp. 79–104. The "seriousness" attributed to the novel, while a genuine feature of some of Scott's novels for some readers, should also be put in perspective: the "historical instruction" of some novels was also used as a sort of alibi justifying the entertainment. This is one of the central themes in Tippkötter's *Walter Scott* significantly subtitled *Geschichte als Unterhaltung,* "History as Entertainment."

60. As early as *Waverley,* there was a tendency among reviewers to praise Scott's descriptions and delineations while dismissing the plot as being "of little consequence." According to the *British Critic:* "This tale should be ranked in the same class with the Arabian Nights' entertainments, in which the story, however it may for a moment engage the attention, is but of little consequence, in proportion to the faithful picture which they present of the manners and customs of the past" (193). For other comments on *Waverley* highlighting the delineation of characters and scenes, while dismissing the plot, see *Scots Magazine,* 524, 533.The reviews of *Ivanhoe* also reflect an impatience with the want of a "real story" (*Monthly Magazine,* 71), the book being more a "series of animated representations" (*London Magazine,* 83) than a well-constructed whole. One curious exception to this general dismissal of the plot construction is *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* which presented the plot as the successful part of *Ivanhoe* (262). That Scott concurred with the general view of the weakness of his plots, or in any case that this was a point he was willing to concede to his critics, is borne out by comments in the review of *Old Mortality* that he co-authored for the *Quarterly Review,* where he referred among other things to the "loose and incoherent style of the narration" (115).

61. The distinction between plot and characterization also played a role in Conder's commentary in the *Eclectic Review,* where he suggested that characteristic of novels is the fact that the story is the "basis and superstructure" and that "character, moral sentiment, and description" are reduced to mere ornaments; Scott as a novelist, therefore, had been above all interested in sensationalist events rather than in edification (311).

62. The *Critical Review* explicitly linked its appreciation for the vividness of Scott's portraits to the way in which characterization was embedded in action rather than ladled out in discrete passages of description (109).

63. See Jakobson's "The Dominant" for an account of foregrounding as a feature of literary communication; on the way in which the novelty of an element may increase its perceptibility, see Tomashevsky's "Thematics," 93. As Tippkötter shows, the public's interest in Scott's treatment of manners is reflected in the choice of passages for quotation in the reviews (*Walter Scott,* 37–41).

64. See also the *British Review*'s praise of *Old Mortality* for having made "the superstitions, the political notions and errors, the arts, the enjoyments, the modes of thinking and style of expression that distinguished those who preceded us by a few generations... irresistibly attractive" (185).

65. For a recent theoretical echo of this valorization of the "nameless" in history, see Rancière, *Les noms de l'histoire.*

66. The metaphor of water flowing at different speeds, which Jeffrey used to describe the layeredness of historical reality, was echoed by T. H. Lister in his 1832 survey of the *Waverley Novels* in the *Edinburgh Review:*

> [Scott's novels] have given us pictures of past days, which what is commonly called History had neglected to afford. We now feel more fully that dates and names,—nay, even the articles of a treaty, or the issue of a battle, although durable pieces of knowledge, are yet trivial, compared with the importance and utility of being able to penetrate below that surface on which float the great events and stately pageants of the time.... Great changes in the condition and opinions of a people will silently and gradually take place, unmarked by any signal event; whilst events the most striking, and apparently important, will glitter and vanish like bubbles in the sun, and leave no visible trace of their effect. (77–78)

This aquatic metaphor is echoed in Fernand Braudel's more recent distinction between the almost immobile history of the environment, the "swelling currents" of the history of society, and the "surface disturbances" of particular events, those "crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs," *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II,* 1:20–21.

67. Struever, "Historical Discourse," 264. The point that fiction excludes controversy is also made by Harshaw, "Fictionality and Fields of Reference," where he proposes that fictional works do not elicit any counterstatements, even when they are based in great detail on actual observations and experiences: "This is the cardinal difference, for example, between a biography (or autobiography) on the other hand and an autobiographical novel on the other. In the second case, we are not *supposed* to bring counterevidence or argue that the writer has distorted specific facts" (237; my emphasis).

68. "French society was to be the historian, I was only to be the secretary" ("La Société française allait être l'historien, je ne devais être que le secrétaire"). Balzac, "Avant-propos," *La comédie humaine,* 1:52.

69. Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country,* 213.

70. Other examples of supplementary texts are [Walter Scott], *Portraits Illustrative of the Novels, Tales, and Romances of the Author of "Waverley"* (1824); Richard Warner, *Illustrations, Historical, Biographical, and Miscellaneous, of the Novels by the Author of "Waverley"* (1823); [Walter Scott], *Landscape Illustrations of the Waverley Novels, with Descriptions of the Views* (1832); Charles Robert Leslie and Charles Heath, *The Waverley Album : Containing Fifty-one Line Engravings to Illustrate the Novels and Tales of Sir Walter Scott* (1832); John Martin, ed., *Landscape Illustrations of the Novels of the Author of "Waverley," with Portraits of the Principal Female Characters* (1833); [Walter Scott], *The Waverley Keepsake, and Abbotsford Album: or Beauties of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (1838); M. C. Pelle, *Landscape-historical Illustrations of the Waverley Novels / Nouvelles illustrations anglaises des romans de Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (1840); [Walter Scott], *The Book of Waverley Gems: In a Series of Engraved Illustrations of Incidents and Scenery in Sir Walter Scott's Novels* (1846); Sidney Cornish, *The Waverley Manual or Handbook: of the Chief Characters, Incidents, and Descriptions in the Waverley Novels* (1871).

71. [Forsyth], *The Waverley Anecdotes,* xiii.

72. Chambers, *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley,* 115. Another example of tangential commentary is Forsyth's lengthy digression on the diffusion of knowledge in the Highlands. *The Waverley Anecdotes,* 68–117.

73. G. Wright et al., *Landscape-Historical Illustrations of Scotland,* 45. Wright also suggests a veritable epidemic of "sitings" of the original of Tully-Veolan, the manor house described in *Waverley,* 8. Scott also refers to this matter in a Magnum Opus note, listing a number of mansions resembling Tully-Veolan while denying that it was based on any single prototype (*Waverley,* 79).

74. See Crockett, *The Scott Originals,* 180–83; also *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* 11:169.

75. That Scott's work further stimulated interest in unsung heroes is indicated by the case of Helen Walker, the prototype of Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian,* whose story was drawn to his attention in a letter from a Mrs. Goldie; on this correspondence, see Scott, *Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations,* 1:419–26. Mrs. Goldie had originally proposed to erect a monument to Walker herself, but in passing the story on to Scott, she left it to the writer "to perpetuate her memory in a more durable manner" (426); on the instigation of her daughter, he subsequently also paid for the monument in stone.

76. Scott himself wrote about thirty-five pages of the fifty-page-long commentary on *Old Mortality* in the *Quarterly Review,* William Gifford wrote about five pages, and William Erskine wrote the remaining ten using material supplied by Scott. Given the preponderance of Scott's influence, it seems justifiable to attribute the opinions stated in the review to Scott himself; see Martin Lightfoot's "Scott's Self-Reviewal."

77. The reference in this passage is to the actor John Emery (1777–1822), declared by Leigh Hunt to be "almost perfect" in his representation of rustics (*Dictionary of National Biography*). Scott's analysis of the public's reaction is borne out by the apparent correlation between "distance" and "level of abstraction" in the response to his novels. While readers in Scotland tended to react to details, reviewers in North America and France seemed to focus on the underlying abstract principles that those details exemplified; thus, the *North American Review* (258) stressed the "moral truth" to be gained from *Old Mortality,* while the *Annales Politiques* (1) and the *Archives philosophiques* (52) saw it as a novel about the dangers of fanaticism in general (a theme they saw as particularly relevant to contemporary Frenchmen). That temporal distance may play a role, alongside geographical distance, in reducing the historical interest of a novel or in highlighting its aesthetic function is also evident in the reception of *Ivanhoe* (see note 115).

78. Eugène Sue's *Les mystères de Paris,* which as one of the first serial novels also reached new groups of readers, seems to have evoked a similar type of response; see Thiesse's analysis of the hundreds of letters sent to Sue by readers, many of which involved the identification of possible prototypes ("L'éducation sociale d'un romancier").

79. Review of *Waverley* in the *Anti-Jacobin Review,* 222.

80. On the conception of the Magnum Opus edition, see Millgate, *Scott's Last Edition,* 1–13.

81. Millgate, *Walter Scott,* 8–10. Footnotes were a regular feature of the anthologies of poetry being assembled in this period. Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–3), for example, was almost swamped by additional notes; for more on this point, see Chapter 4.

82. Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction,* 217.

83. Melville, *Billy Budd,* 94.

84. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* 11:266–57.

85. Recent editors of Scott engage with the novelist, pointing out where he was off the mark or where his view has been confirmed by recent research: see, for example,

Calder's approval of Scott's account in *Old Mortality,* 532 n. 3, 533–34 n. 9, 538 n. 10. On a more critical note, see 542 n. 12 and 544 n. 6 (where Calder concurs with M'Crie), and 579 (where he points out that Scott's assertion that "Agriculture began to revive" [400] after 1688 is a misrepresentation of reality since there was a serious famine in the years 1695–99).

86. David Hewitt, "General Introduction," in Walter Scott, *The Tale of Old Mortality,* xv.

87. Robertson, *Legitimate Histories,* 120, 151–60.

88. The idea that Scott's notes do not so much assert his authority as problematize it is echoed by Joep Leerssen, "Over de ontologische status en de tekstuele situering van imagotypen."

89. Walter Scott, *Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations,* 1:178–79, 183.

90. Ibid., 2:115–16.

91. On controversy as a sign of the resistance of events to arbitrary interpretations, see Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History,* 259–60.

92. Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader.*

93. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* 11:288–89, 301–2. Upon receiving protests from the Reverend Patrick Graham to the effect that he was still very much alive, Scott also had to correct the impression given in *Rob Roy* that that particular gentleman was deceased (ibid., 288n).

94. Walter Scott, *Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations* 2:327–28. On the reactions to *Peveril of the Peak,* see *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* 11:371–72, 385. For a similar protest from a descendant, see also the Magnum Opus introduction to *Anne of Geierstein, Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations,* 3:352–53. In this case, however, Scott went so far as to suggest that writers have the obligation to correct errors when they are pointed out to them. But his ambivalence on the matter is clear in a private letter to Wordsworth where he expressed his impatience at those who read fiction as if it were literally history and, at the same time, admitted that if he had known that there were any descendants around, he would have been more careful in choosing that particular subject and making free with it as he did. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* 11:371–72. In *The Talisman,* Scott quoted as an instance of historical ignorance Charles Mills's *History of the Crusades,* volume 2, page 61, where the writer betrayed no knowledge of Edith Plantagenet (not surprisingly, since Scott had invented her). The response Scott conveyed to the protesting historian, whose name he even got wrong, is disingenuous: "It was neither the intention of the Author to charge Mr. Milne [*sic*] for whose talents & industry he has the greatest respect with ignorance nor to impose a fictitious genealogy upon the public as a real one a deceit which would have in no respect added to the effect of his narrative. But most Authors of romance are in the habit of referring to imaginary authorities accessible to themselves alone as Cervantes quotes Cid Hamet Benengeli." *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* 9:271–72.

95. Ryan, "Fiction, Non-factuals, and the Principle of Minimal Departure."

96. For a brief account of the background to M'Crie's review, see M'Crie, *Miscellaneous Writings,* 247–58. For its background in generic discussions of the period, see Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority,* 137–60.

97. Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott,* 5:157, 168–69. The notes subsequently added by Thomas M'Crie Jr. to his 1841 edition of his father's work are often reactions to Scott's reactions to his father's reactions to *Old Mortality.*

98. M'Crie, *Vindication of the Covenanters,* 15. Further references in the text.

99. I have analyzed attenuating/aggravating techniques as a feature of historical controversy in more detail in *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation,* 90–136.

100. For a more detailed discussion of the way the relative importance of different groups may be deformed in representations of them, see ibid., 103–36.

101. For a recent discussion of the way inaccuracies at the level of detail play a role in controversies regarding interpretations (how many details can be wrong before the interpretation collapses?), see Novick, *That Noble Dream,* 612–22; Gossman, *Between History and Literature,* 317–24.

102. In the footnotes he added to his father's work, the Rev. Thomas M'Crie Jr. responded in turn to Scott's argument with the retort that the novel was indeed a romance, "A Romance, however, which professed to be founded on history, and to be very curious in such details." *Miscellaneous Writings,* 306.

103. Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority,* 152.

104. See Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority,* 161–94. Hogg's *Brownie of Bodsbeck* was actually conceived prior to *Old Mortality,* but since it also deals with the Covenanting period, it was immediately construed as a reaction to Scott when it was published in 1818; see Douglas Mack's editorial notes to the 1976 edition (xii–xiv). Galt's account of the background to *Ringan Gilhaize* are to be found in *The Literary Life, and Miscellanies of John Galt,* 1:254. Douglas Mack has pointed to the similar emergence of counterfictions in the case of *Waverley;* in a novel entitled *The Three Perils of Women* (1823), James Hogg responded to Scott's sidestepping of the horrors of Culloden in *Waverley* and produced an account of that event which was, in turn, countered by Scott in *Redgauntlet* (1824); see Mack, "Culloden and After."

105. A note on "Moderate Presbyterians" added to the Magnum Opus edition reads:

> The author does not, by any means, desire that Poundtext should be regarded as a just representation of the moderate presbyterians, among whom there were many ministers whose courage was equal to their good sense and sound views of religion. Were he to write the tale anew, he would probably endeavour to give the character a higher turn. It is certain, however, that the Cameronians imputed to their opponents in opinion concerning the Indulgence ... a disposition not only to seek their own safety, but to enjoy themselves. (*Old Mortality,* 568)

This passage is then followed up by a lengthy quotation from a dissenting source (Hamilton's *Faithful Contendings)* to support Scott's argument.

106. Rigney, "Time for Visions and Revisions."

107. Indicative of Aiton's priorities is the fact that he concludes his work by discussing "the folly and danger of the lower orders in society becoming politicians, or attempting to direct the government," *A History of the Rencounter at Drumclog,* 98ff.

108. As a reflection of Scott's influence, it is interesting to note that the preface to the 1870 edition of John Howie's *Scots Worthies* (originally published in 1774) invoked the possibility, if only then to dismiss it, that Scott's "Old Mortality" had been modeled on John Howie; this rather gratuitous reference suggests that Scott's highly narrativized account of the Covenanting Wars had succeeded in establishing itself as the communal frame of reference for all subsequent accounts.

109. Walter Scott, *Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations,* 2:335. See also [Forsyth], *The Waverley Anecdotes,* v: "There is indeed not only no real danger attending these historical novels and romances, but if properly conducted, they produce actual good.... Hence, as in the following pages, is induced a taste for biography and antiquities, and

the consequent investigation of our ancient chronicles; for many would be led to turn to such scenes in order to learn more of the characters which had already interested them."

110. [Lister], "The Waverley Novels," 67, 77–78.

111. Ibid., 78. Lister's comments had been anticipated in an article entitled "De la réalité en littérature," published in *Le Mercure du dix-neuvième siècle* in 1825:

> For a long time history has been no more than a monotonous register of the births, marriages, battles, and downfall of princes. As for the nations, historians did not condescend to speak of them.... We know nothing about the past [*le passé est entièrement ignoré*]; we have no idea what sort of lives our ancestors lived in their castles, their cabins, their forests. When Walter Scott came on the scene, it was as if a knight sent to sleep by some wicked spirit suddenly wakes up and tells us about or conjures up in detail the public and private lives of our ancestors. We see them acting, fighting, talking; we witness their tribulations, as if it was all happening today before our very eyes or as if we had been transported back several centuries. Walter Scott made himself a contemporary of the ages he described or, rather, he shared the passions and prejudices of his characters. (506–8)

112. Macaulay, "History," 307–8.

113. Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir,* 158.

114. Partner herself approaches the problem from the other way around, being concerned above all with the possibly negative effects of the deliberate obfuscation of the boundary between the fictitious and the factual on people's sense of belonging to a polity: "The danger inherent in capricious, opportunistic violations of the protocol of historicity is really not that millions of people will absolutely come to believe this or that, but that millions of people will come to be cynical, disabused and wary, to believe nothing and thus feel no connection with the polity at all." "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," 39.

115. It is worth noting in this regard that the response to *Ivanhoe* (1819), the first of Scott's works to be set in the Middle Ages and in England, was much more muted than in the case of *Old Mortality,* with more emphasis being placed on matters of literary composition than on history. The aesthetic nature of this response can be attributed to the fact that the Scottian method was already less novel in 1819 and more obviously formulaic, and to the fact that the subject matter treated was simply too distant in time and noncontroversial to engage the passions of the reading public. This suggests that readers' emphasis on the representational dimension of a novel and their subsequent readiness to engage critically with it may be linked both to the degree to which the writing is innovatory and to the temporal and cultural distance between readers and the topic treated. On *Ivanhoe* as a turning point in Scott's career, see Tippkötter, *Walter Scott,* 90–112. The tone was set by *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine:* "[T]he era to which Ivanhoe relates is so remote, that the manners are, of course, unlike any thing either the author or the readers of the present times could have had any opportunity of knowing by personal observation. Hence the writer has found it necessary to set them forth with much minuteness and elaboration; so that in the opening the narrative appears like a curious antiquarian exhibition" (262). Francis Jeffrey complained that, because the period was so remote, the reader did not have enough information for the "filling up, and details, which alone could give body and life to the picture," which left the work "a splendid pageant" of "exaggerated beings" rather than a realistic work of his-

torical interest (*Edinburgh Review,* 6, 54). In the *Literary Gazette,* the work was described as more of a romance than any of the preceding novels because of the remoteness of the period, and as less captivating because of the extent of our ignorance of domestic and social life in the Middle Ages (817), an assessment echoed by the *British Review* (398). The *Lady's Monthly Museum* judged the work exclusively in aesthetic terms according to the amount of entertainment it would afford.

116. Lister, "Walter Scott—Has History Gained by His Writings?" 349, 346, 350. As early as 1814, the acerbic John Wilson Croker had already asked if—in the long term—Scott would not have done better to expend his energies and talents on trying to write only on the basis of fact instead of producing this stop-gap measure that was "almost true": "We cannot but wish that the ingenious and intelligent author of Waverley had rather employed himself in recording *historically* the character and transactions of his countrymen *Sixty Years* since, than in writing a work, which, though it may be, in its facts, almost true, and in its delineations perfectly accurate, will yet, in sixty years *hence,* be regarded, or rather, probably, *disregarded,* as a *mere* romance, and the gratuitous invention of a facetious fancy" (review of *Waverley* in the *Quarterly Review,* 377). In his highly critical review of Macaulay's *History of England,* Croker also hit out at Scott and his imitators (see Chapter 2).

117. Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of "As If,"* 18–19.

118. Shephard, "Digging Up the Past." Barker's trilogy appeared as: *Regeneration* (1991), *The Eye in the Door* (1993), and *The Ghost Road* (1995).

119. Steiner, *The Scandal of Pleasure.*

120. The point is made clear by the reviewer in the *Anniston Star* (quoted in the inside jacket of *The Eye in the Door*): "Barker's vivid recreation of this difficult wartime period is strengthened by the presence of its real-life characters, among them Dr. Rivers' famous patient, the soldier, pacifist and poet, Siegfried Sassoon." In light of the publishers' emphasis on the historical dimension of the novel, the regulation disclaimer on the inside jacket of the various volumes seems disingenuous, if not downright hypocritical (however justified by fears of litigation): "This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously."

2. Representability

1. Lacroix in Anquetil, *Histoire de France,* 1:7, 13. On the popularity of Anquetil's history, see M. Lyons, "Les best-sellers." For a brief recognition of the importance of abbreviations and summaries often "organized on new principles" as an element in historiographical production, see Louandre, "Statistique littéraire de la production intellectuelle en France depuis quinze ans," 332. Carrard points out that many of the doctoral theses written in France are so lengthy that they are often published in an abridged form (*Poetics of the New History,* 55).

2. Orr, *Headless History,* 1–6.

3. Mézeray, *Histoire de France, depuis Faramond jusqu'à maintenant,* 1:[vi].

4. S. Stewart, *On Longing,* 33–35.

5. See also Aug. Thierry's comments on the perilous balancing act he had to perform as a historical writer between emphasizing details and losing the coherence of the whole: "I wrote and erased; like Penelope. But thanks to my unshakable willpower

and 10 hours of work per day, the work continued to advance." *Dix ans d'études historiques,* xxxii.

6. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II,* 1:17.

7. Elton, *The Practice of History,* 114–15.

8. Mably, *Oeuvres complètes,* 12:455.

9. On Macaulay's changes of plan, see Trevor-Roper's introduction to the (abridged) Penguin edition (20–25). John Wilson Croker referred to the history's "impracticable scale" in the article he wrote for the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

10. White, "Historicism, History, and the Imagination," 112.

11. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe,* 111.

12. Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation,* 47–61.

13. LaCapra, *Soundings in Critical Theory,* 37 (also quoted by Spiegel, "History and Post-modernism IV," 196).

14. Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation,* especially 90–101.

15. See Scarry, *Resisting Representation,* 3–4.

16. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres,* 3:26–27.

17. Barthes, "L'effet de réel," 87.

18. That readers expect a text to be coherent can be seen in their willingness to fill in the gaps where the writer has not made certain connections explicit; see, on this point, Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance,* 65–117; also Iser, "Die Appellstruktur der Texte." On the fact that language is thus based on *assertion* and not mere presentation, see Chatman, "What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)."

19. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres,* 3:21. See also Aug. Thierry's declaration that he had done his best as a historian to "multiply the number of details so as to exhaust the primary sources, but without breaking up the story and destroying the unity of the whole." *Dix ans d'études historiques,* xxxi. On the tenacity of the *historia magistra vitae* tradition up to the end of the eighteenth century, see Coleman, "The Uses of the Past (14th–16th Centuries)."

20. Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire,* 102.

21. On the notion of configurational understanding, see Mink, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension."

22. See Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding,* 124.

23. The terms Van Dijk uses to describe forms of global coherence are "conditional," "functional," or "conceptual," terms I have translated into the more familiar "logic," "narrativity," "association." Van Dijk ("Semantic Discourse Analysis") sees associative coherence as the weaker form of coherence typical of poetry, but it can also be seen as typical of description; for a more detailed account of the "sense relations" between concepts, see John Lyons, *Semantics* 1: 270–335. In practice, as I show here, discourses may be composed according to combinations of these principles, and they may be found coherent in various degrees. Thus narrativity plays a cohesive role in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) as it does in Johan Huizinga's *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919), but this role is much weaker than in, for example, the fairy tales of Grimm or the novels of Wilkie Collins. Carrard's discussion (*Poetics of the New History,* esp. 47–54) of the narrative dimensions of the problem-oriented history writing of the Annales school offers support for the view (see Chapter 1) that narrativity may occur in varying degrees.

24. Vinaver, *À la recherche d'une poétique médiévale,* esp. 45–46.

25. Stendhal's "Racine et Shakespeare, No 11, ou réponse au manifeste contre le romantisme, prononcé par M. Auger dans une séance solennelle de l'institut" (1825). On

the "vortical form" characteristic of romanticism and its break with the unilinear compositions of classicism, see Kroeber, "Romantic Historicism," 163.

26. The importance of the fragment in romantic aesthetics is also discussed in Bell, "The Idea of Fragmentariness in German Literature and Philosophy," and Seyhan, *Representation and Its Discontents,* 72. Zimmerman discusses the status of the fragment from the mid-eighteenth century onward in *The Boundaries of Fiction,* 214.

27. Charles Grice ("Logic and Conversation") puts the chronic necessity of compromise in face of conflicting principles at the center of his theory of communicative conventions; the maxims guiding communication may be partially violated or openly flouted without undermining their regulative function. Whereas abandoning the rules of chess makes playing impossible, the rules of discourse allow for a greater margin of deviation; see, on this point, Mailloux, *Interpretive Conventions,* 126–39. The flouting of conventions has arguably become itself a convention in modern literature. Carrard points out, moreover, how difficult, if not impossible, it is for even the most experimental of texts to abandon discursive conventions altogether (*Poetics of the New History,* 77).

28. Gallie, *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding,* 68.

29. Urdank, review of Hole, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order in England.*

30. Bucholz, review of Showalter, *Tannenberg.*

31. Zaller, review of Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution.*

32. Maza, review of Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution.* It is worth pointing out that Schama's experimental *Dead Certainties* was criticized, not just for its departures from evidence, but for its "pointlessness": "But it is no good for the historian to wring his hands and simply lay out, as Schama says he has done in this book, 'all the accidents and contingencies that go into the making of an historical narrative.' " Wood, review of Schama, *Dead Certainties,* 16. See also Hanawalt and White, review of *Dead Certainties,* 122.

33. See Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story.*

34. For a more extensive typology of the possible relations between a narrative of past events and contemporary realities, see Rüsen, "Historical Narration." On the orientational function of historical writing and its role in defining cultural identity, see also Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story,* 202–42; Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History,* 154–55; Novick, *That Noble Dream,* 469–21. As Novick points out, however, the choice of topic may not always be linked to social relevance in contemporary historiography, where the pressure to publish original work also plays a role in the preference for certain research areas (ibid., 581–92). Ankersmit posits an aesthetic turn in some recent historiography in his account of the parallels between modern painting and historiographical practice (*History and Tropology,* 122–22).

35. Staël, "Essai sur les fictions," *Oeuvres complètes,* 1:68. It is interesting to note in this regard that the emphasis of Madame de Staël's discussion lay not so much on the ontological status of novelistic representation or its aesthetic function as on the type of subject matter novelists dealt with. John Dunlop made a similar point in his history of prose fiction: "[I]n Fiction we can discriminate without impropriety, and enter into detail without meanness. Hence, it has been remarked, that it is chiefly in the fictions of an age that we can discover the modes of living, dress, and manners of the period." *The History of Fiction,* 8. Memoirs also represented another generic haven for the history of domestic life and (linked to this) the history of women; see Pomata, "Storia particolare e storia universale" and Woolf, "A Feminine Past?"

36. Croker, review of Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, 551–52, 578–79. In his essay "History" (1828), Macaulay had complained that historians "have imposed on themselves a code of conventional decencies as absurd as that which has been the bane of the French drama. The most characteristic and interesting circumstances are omitted or softened down, because, as we are told, they are too trivial for the majesty of history" (303). Croker's accusation of historiographical "impropriety" should be put in the perspective of his ideological preferences and his disagreement with Macaulay's Whiggish version of English history. For a more recent rejection of "trivial" cultural history, see Himmelfarb, "Telling It As You Like It" and *The New History and the Old* (especially "History with the Politics Left Out," 13–32).

37. Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire*, 253–78. See also Ankersmit's "The Reality Effect in the Writing of History" (*History and Tropology*, 125–61), where the "dynamics of historiographical topology" is described as an ongoing centrifugal movement to interests that are marginal with respect to dominant concerns. This centrifugal movement recalls the "canonization of the junior branch" principle of the Russian Formalist Tynjanov, whereby marginalized genres and neglected writers are retroactively canonized as models for new writing. See Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, 260.

38. The term "system of relevance" has been borrowed from Veit-Brause, "Paradigms, Schools, Traditions," 63.

39. For example, "[T]he obscurity is so great as regards our first and second race of monarchs that one can compare those periods to the polar regions, where even daytime is never more than a faint twilight." Mézeray, *Histoire de France*, 1:v. Also see the Comte de Ségur's criticism in 1823 of Sismondi's treatment of the Middle Ages in his *Histoire des Français* (1821–44) (quoted in Réizov, *L'historiographie romantique française*, 77): "The lack of historical interest exists... obviously in the subject itself and in the savage barbarity of our ancient institutions. This chaos also destroys any dramatic interest. Only with difficulty can one distinguish the foreground from the background, the king from his subjects, the suzerain from his vassals. There is no unity for the mind to grasp, it being impossible to make a whole from such anarchic elements." See also Hallam's comment: "Many considerable portions of time, especially before the twelfth century, may justly be deemed so barren of events worthy of remembrance, that a single sentence or paragraph is often sufficient to give the character of entire generations, and of long dynasties of obscure kings." *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, 1:v. In 1738 Francis Wise referred to the times preceding Julius Caesar's invasion as "dark, and impenetrable, wild, without letters, and almost without documents." "A Letter to Dr. Mead concerning some Antiquities in Berkshire" (Oxford, 1738), quoted in Piggott, *William Stukely*, 13. In Clemont Edmonds's *Observations upon Caesar's Commentaries* (1604), the campaign in England is described as unsuitable for discourse, "being indeed but a scrambling warre," quoted in Piggott, *William Stukely*, 17. The perceived impenetrability of the Middle Ages explains such a phenomenon as Marchangy's *La Gaule poétique*, which, through multiple parallels with classical figures and a highly florid, conventionalized use of language, attempts to show that ancient Gaul is after all worth writing about.

40. Michelet, *Ecrits de jeunesse*, 236.

41. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, 3:55. The work of Voltaire has often been identified as a break away from the limits of a purely political history; see, for example, Le Goff, "L'histoire nouvelle," 222. On Voltaire's relative failure to live up to his own theory, see for example Haskell, *History and Its Images*, 206. Macaulay did not

merely welcome alternatives to battle history but actually subordinated in theory the interest of battles to that of what he called "noiseless revolutions" located within the private sphere:

> The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events.... They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand firesides. ("History," 304)

42. Austen, *The Novels of Jane Austen,* 5:108. The idea of an alternative history was perhaps nowhere better expressed than in the title of George Pitt's *English History, With Its Wars Left Out*; see Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory,* 440.

43. Sarazin, *Du progrès des études historiques en France,* 19–20.

44. The demand for a new history that would address the concerns of the general public reflects the democratic thinking characteristic of the Revolutionary period and was paralleled in the literary domain by the development of writing styles allowing for the exploration of individual emotions and experiences; on this point, see Schmidt, *Die Selbstorganisation des Sozialsystems Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert.*

45. Michelet, *Journal,* 1:378.

46. Aug. Thierry, *Essai sur l'histoire de la formation et des progrès du tiers états,* 200.

47. See Lister, "The Waverley Novels," quoted Chapter 1, note 66.

48. The huge range of subjects treated as part of "antiquities" (from Druidic religions, to pastimes, to the institution of court fools and chivalric codes) can be seen in Leber's twenty-volume *Collection des meilleurs dissertations, notices et traités particuliers relatifs à l'histoire de France* (1838) stretching back to the sixteenth century. In the preface to this collection, Leber distinguished between "history proper," memoirs, and treatises; the latter were presented as a necessary supplement to large-scale history, by providing detailed examinations of particular phenomena and by giving insight into the ideas motivating actions. History is incomplete, he suggested, if "one does not happen upon the secret of their intimate code [*code intérieur*] and their private life"(1:xvi).

49. Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," 102. On antiquarians as collectors interested in "cabinets of the past" rather than in design and causality, and on the conservative, nostalgic dimensions of antiquarianism, see S. Stewart, *On Longing,* 140–45. For an account of antiquarianism that emphasizes its innovatory as well as its conservative dimensions, see P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional.* General surveys of antiquarianism in Britain are given by Peardon, *The Transition in English Historical Writing;* O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations;* J. Levine, *Humanism and History,* 73–106; Parry, *The Trophies of Time.* With specific attention to the more fanciful aspects of antiquarian system building, see Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination,* 68–156. On antiquarianism in France, see Barret-Kriegel, *Les historiens et la monarchie,* and Gossman, *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment;* also, with respect to early attempts to go beyond battle-and-siege history, Vivanti, "Les recherches de la France d'Étienne Pasquier."

50. In his introduction to the multivolume collection on *Les lieux de mémoire,* Pierre Nora notes that 43 percent of visitors to the National Archives in 1982 came for private genealogical research (only 38 percent were professional researchers). "Entre mémoire et histoire," xxix.

51. Le Grand d'Aussy, *Histoire de la vie privée des François,* 1:1–2. In locating this and other works, I made grateful use of Gabriel Monod's *Bibliographie de l'histoire de France.* Le Grand is best known for the editions of medieval fabliaux he offered to the public between 1779 and 1781 as sources of insight into the manners of earlier ages: "In fact, history is not just the narrative of the political and military experiences of the nation; it offers a portrait of the nation at different stages in its development [*c'est le tableau de ses différens âges*]." Le Grand d'Aussy, *Contes dévots,* v.

52. The domesticization of history evident in Le Grand's concentration on "the Frenchman" by his fireside is also evident, if more indirectly so, in Capefigue's presentation of his *Histoire de Philippe-Auguste* as a family scene ("tableau de famille")(ii).

53. Le Grand d'Aussy, *Histoire de la vie privée des François,* 1:1–2. For an analysis of the popularity of tripartite structures in contemporary history writing, see Carrard, *Poetics of the New History,* 51.

54. Le Grand d'Aussy, *Histoire de la vie privée des François,* 1:6–7.

55. Ibid., 1:8.

56. Le Grand's work was followed up by a sequel in 1826: the anonymously published *Vie publique et privée des Français à la ville, à la cour, et dans les provinces depuis la mort de Louis XV jusqu'au commencement du règne de Charles X, pour faire suite à la "Vie privée des François" de Le Grand d'Aussy par une société de gens de lettres.* It is worth noting that this series of sketches relating to aspects of everyday life in France since the eighteenth century is organized on quasi-biographical principles: the first volume is devoted to the public life and is organized according to the different professional groups; the second part treats of aspects of private life from birth to death and burial.

57. Review in the *Journal de Monsieur* (1783), 1:281. Quoted in Wilson, *A Medievalist in the Eighteenth Century,* 24.

58. Parry, *The Trophies of Time,* 16.

59. Walpole's dismissal of antiquarian writing was in a letter to William Cole, January 1773, quoted in J. Levine, *Humanism and History,* 104. That getting bogged down in detail was considered typical of antiquarianism is borne out by Thomas Pownall's *A Treatise on the Study of Antiquities* (1782), which complains that inferior antiquarians had made a bad name for all the others with their fantastical speculations and their alleged inability to choose relevant from irrelevant details (he himself promised to do better, but never managed to finish his treatise beyond the first volume).

60. In his *The Boundaries of Fiction* (212, 215), Zimmerman notes among other things the influence of Henry Mackenzie on Scott (*Waverley* was dedicated to the sentimental novelist) and, in turn, the influence of "erudite" writings on Mackenzie.

61. Nodier, review of *Old Mortality* in *Journal des débats* (1817), praised Scott for the choice of an interesting period "which has the novelistic attractions particular to civil wars." It is worth pointing out that François Guizot linked the suitability of "civilization" as a historiographical topic to the fact that it supposed progress and was accordingly narratable. *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe,* 7–8, 14.

62. Le Grand d'Aussy, *Histoire de la vie privée des François,* 3:346.

63. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight,* 10.

64. Elton, *The Practice of History,* 172.

65. The history that has been written until now, Monteil wrote, was just the history of kings, of clerics, of military men, and so on: "It is not the history of the different estates, it is not history." *Histoire des Français des divers états,* 1:v. For the term "la vieille histoire-bataille," see Monteil, *Les Français pour la première fois dans l'histoire de France,* 8.

66. Monteil, *Traité de matériaux manuscrits,* 2:387–90.

67. On Monteil's biography, see Jules Janin's *Amans-Alexis Monteil,* originally published in the *Journal des débats* (2 March 1850), and republished in the 1853 edition of the *Histoire des Français des divers états* (1:iii–xl). Since Monteil did not have extensive access to organized archives, he was very active in buying and selling manuscripts in the 1820s and 1830s. (Indeed, his treatise is a sort of "let-everyman-be-his-own-historian," since it was very much concerned with calling attention to possible documentary riches in the attics of his readers that might give valuable information about hidden aspects of life in the past.) Monteil's British contemporaries Francis Palgrave and Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas were to complain explicitly of the pressures put on historians at this period to write attractively in the absence of other means of support; see their *Truths and Fictions of the Middle Ages* (112–13) and *Observations on the State of Historical Literature and on the Society of Antiquaries,* respectively. On the gradual institutionalization of history writing in France, see Theis, "Guizot et les institutions de mémoire," and Den Boer, *History as a Profession.* For England (which trailed somewhat behind France), see P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional.*

68. Garinet, *Histoire de la magie en France,* written from an Enlightenment interest in the progress of rationality, described the history of witchcraft in France in terms of society's gradual liberation from superstition. Garinet explained in the preface that, since he was writing on a topic that had not yet been treated, he had had to make special efforts to steer a course between the Scylla of being too brief and the Charybdis of being too long-winded ([v]). On the conventional character of periodization and the use of the century as a meaningful unit, see Milo, *Trahir le temps.*

69. In the opening pages of his volumes on the seventeenth century, Monteil both acknowledges Voltaire as a predecessor and takes him to task for his shortcomings; for the fact that, while he claimed to take manners into historiographical account, he ended up writing at best about theological debates and at worst about battles. *Histoire des Français des divers états,* 7:1.

70. See Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage,* 30. Lévi-Strauss's remarks relate specifically to mythical thought; in applying his idea of "bricolage" to discourse, then, I am myself performing an act of intellectual makeshifting.

71. A comparable form of "iconicity" in discursive form can be found in Barante's *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne* (1824), where the historian worked on the principle that the best way to represent the Middle Ages was by imitating the style of the medieval chroniclers. In the preface to *Ivanhoe* (526), Scott explicitly warned against trying to imitate the discursive styles of earlier periods, insisting on the importance of "translating" the past into a modern language.

72. "I have composed a travelogue rather than a history, because in a travelogue everything is in motion and this allows for the inclusion of details that are forbidden to the historian" (Barthélemy, *Voyage du jeune Anarcharsis,* 1:3). Francis Haskell also mentions the use of the travelogue as a framework within which to discuss art history (*History and Its Images,* 350). The travelogue also figures prominently in Bonnie Smith's account of amateur historiography in the nineteenth century (*The Gender of History,* 157–84). Gabrielle Spiegel offers examples of the adaption of genealogical and epic models by medieval historians (*The Past as Text,* 99–110, 185–86).

73. The term "antiquarian romance" has been borrowed here from Thomas Pownall's eponymous *An Antiquarian Romance* (1795), which bears the significant subtitle "Endeavouring to Make a Line, by which the most Ancient People and the Processions

of the Earliest Inhabitancy of Europe may be Investigated." The fact that Scott reproduced his contribution to *Queenhoo Hall* in the *Introductions, and Notes and Illustrations* published on the occasion of the Magnum Opus edition suggests that he continued to consider this early publication as part of his oeuvre. He had actually begun writing *Waverley* as early as 1805, that is, before his work on *Queenhoo Hall* (a few chapters were completed before the project was temporarily abandoned). Among the works published by Joseph Strutt were *The Chronicle of England* (1777–78); *A Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England, from the Establishment of the Saxons in Britain to the Present Time* (1796–99); *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (1801). Peardon (*The Transition in English Historical Writing*) describes Strutt as a man too enamoured with the details of everyday life to be interested in arranging them "towards philosophical conclusions" (157).

74. The *Mémoires de l'institut royal de France; Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 14 (1845) indicate that Monteil won the "second prix Gobert" in 1840 and that this was annually upheld until 1844. The Gobert prize was given "for the most erudite and profound work on the history of France and associated subjects." In 1840 the first prize was awarded to Aug. Thierry for his *Récits des temps mérovingiens* (a text I come back to), and this was upheld until his death in 1856.

75. Barante, *Mélanges historiques et littéraires,* 2:101–36. Having compared Monteil's work to the cabinet de Sommerard (101), Barante went on to elaborate on this analogy: "[Monteil] has made for himself a historical museum, a storehouse of curios, collected bit by bit as the occasion arose and deposited at random in his notes or his text ... what was needed was a general point of view that would reveal the connections between this flotsam and jetsam" (102).

76. Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel,* 8:716. A similar point was made by Daunou in his review in the *Journal des savants* (1830), where he praised Monteil for the breadth of his learning but faulted him on his lack of argument: "If there is any ordering principle in the thirty sections making up this work, we have not been able to discern it" (323).

77. Louandre in Monteil, *Histoire de l'industrie française et des gens de métiers,* 1:3.

78. Balzac, *La comédie humaine,* 1:52.

79. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,* 81; also quoted in Ankersmit, *History and Tropology,* 113.

80. Aug. Thierry, *Récits,* 1:3.

81. The failed attempt to write a *Histoire des invasions germaniques,* itself a reworking of an earlier, aborted *Grande Chronique,* is mentioned by Smithson, *Augustin Thierry,* 221. The separate narratives underwent only minor revision between publication in the *Revue des deux mondes* and in book form (ibid., 241). On Thierry and the prix Gobert, see ibid., 197f. Elsewhere I have analyzed the particular compositional problems involved in writing the history of Gaul and the Frankish conquest, problems that stemmed from both the remoteness of the period and its symbolic status as the supposed beginning of French History. Rigney, "Immemorial Routines."

82. As Thierry makes explicit in the preface, Chateaubriand's *Les martyrs* was an important source of inspiration for the *Récits:* these were designed to take up where the novel left off, treating a later period while still focusing on the cultural conflict so vividly encapsulated by the novelist (1:12). On Thierry and the epic model, see Rearick, *Beyond the Enlightenment,* 80.

83. Aug. Thierry, *Récits,* 1:5.

84. Stephen Bann offers an excellent analysis of the "poetics" of collecting in the early nineteenth century in his *The Clothing of Clio* 77–92, showing the underlying logic in the apparent disarray of the "cabinet de Sommerard" often cited as the paradigm of disorder.

85. Thierry had used the phrase "the point of view of racial difference" ("le point de vue de la distinction des races") to describe the organizing principle of his history of the conquest. *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands,* 1:xvi.

86. Aug. Thierry, *Récits,* 2:315–16. On the thematic organization of the work, see in particular Gossman, *Between History and Literature,* 126–46.

87. Aug. Thierry, *Récits,* 1:5.

88. Aug. Thierry, *Récits,* 1:6. Thierry's enthusiasm for Scott's work is also evident in his 1820 essay "Sur la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands; à propos du roman d'*Ivanhoe*" (*Dix ans d'études historiques,* 159–67), the very title of which already anticipates that of Thierry's history of the Conquest of England (1825).

89. As he explains in the preface, Thierry looked for "comprehensive" facts around which secondary facts could be clustered ("[des] faits assez compréhensifs pour servir de point de ralliement à beaucoup de faits secondaires") (*Récits,* 1:7). In response to similar compositional problems, Capefigue opted to organize his account of the Middle Ages around the famous name of Philippe Auguste so as to give a unifying perspective on large-scale social changes (*Histoire de Philippe-Auguste,* 1:v). Barante opted to organize his history around the different reigns of the dukes of Burgundy, a strategy that allowed him to "attach the narrative of each period to a great individual" and provided "a thematic line guiding the reader across the confused mass of facts" *(Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne,* 1:16). Whereas the form chosen by Barante resembles the serial biographies of traditional sovereign-based histories, the form chosen by Thierry is novel in the sense that the short stories he treats consecutively in fact ran partly concurrently (as do the different lives treated by Balzac in *La comédie humaine*).

90. Thierry aimed to give "reality and life" to characters who had hitherto been neglected by historians (*Récits,* 1:7). Elsewhere he described the importance of focusing history on men like ourselves ("ces hommes semblables en tout à nous-mêmes") with whom we can sympathize. Letter to the *Courrier français* (23 July 1820), quoted in Smithson, *Augustin Thierry,* 5. This emphasis on sympathy as a mode of relating to the past can be seen as a later version of Le Grand's concern with the domestic aspects of the past. In this poetics, "vividness," "truth," and "relevance for the public" were closely linked (see Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation,* 1–6).

91. Thierry, *Récits,* 1:291–94. Reflecting a similar movement from setting to action, from description to narration, *Ivanhoe* begins in comparable fashion with an account of the outside of Cedric the Saxon's castle, followed by a general account of the inhabitants, followed by a specific account of what was said and done on a particular day.

92. Thierry offers alternative accounts of Chilperic's marriage settlement, for example: "Either because he lacked the intelligence to think beyond the moment or because he wanted to marry Galeswinthe at all costs … " *Récits,* 1:318.

93. Thierry, *Récits,* 1:326.

94. On Thierry's use of such modalizing terms as "soit que," and "peut-être," see further Smithson, *Augustin Thierry,* 227–40.

95. On this tradition, see Walbank, "Speeches in Greek Historians," in *Selected Papers,* 242–61.

96. Vaihinger's discussion of the similarities and differences between "hypothesis" and "fiction proper" is useful here: fictions are taken from the outset to be at variance with fact, whereas a hypothesis can in principle be proved or disproved by further experience. *The Philosophy of "As If,"* 88. In Thierry's case, we seem to be dealing with a third option, a hypothesis that (in all likelihood) can never be proved or disproved.

97. Villemain, *Discours et mélanges littéraires,* 300.

98. Flint, *Historical Philosophy in France,* 353.

99. On the interest in folk culture, see Rearick, *Beyond the Enlightenment.*

100. Along with Scott's *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830), Michelet himself mentioned among his sources Wright's *Narratives of Sorcery and Magic* (1851); Figuier's *Histoire du merveilleux* (1860), a study of the evolution of beliefs in magic from popular beliefs to mesmerism and hypnotism; and Maury's *Les fées du moyen âge* (1843), one of a series of studies on popular beliefs that paid particular attention to hagiographical legends. The number of such works published from the 1840s on suggests that Michelet was following a more general interest in witchcraft as an alternative to scientific logic and as a potential object of scientific explanation (Figuier, 1: v, refers to a veritable craze for "tables tournantes" in the 1850s). Michelet seems to have known Wright personally and appreciated his work; see *Journal,* 1:394–95, 3:156. A freelance writer of history, Wright was the author of a number of ambitious works of cultural history, including *A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England during the Middle Ages* (1862), *Womankind in Western Europe from the Earliest Times to the Seventeenth Century* (1869), and *The Homes of Other Days: a History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England* (1871).

101. Book 2, chapters 2, 4–12 were taken almost literally from Michelet's *Histoire de France,* volumes 7 (1855), 11 (1857), 12 (1858), and 13 (1860). Michelet also recycled material from lectures delivered in 1843 (see *La sorcière,* ed. Kusters, 34–43).

102. Michelet, *La sorcière,* ed. Viallaneix, 296. For other uses of an allegorical figure, see Aug. Thierry's "Histoire véritable de Jacques Bonhomme" (1821) in *Dix ans d'études historiques,* 308–17; Barante's "Jacques Bonhomme" (1832) in *Mélanges historiques et littéraires,* 2:285–312; Dumas, "Jacques Bonhomme; inédit," in Zimmermann, *Alexandre Dumas Le Grand,* 602–37. In a diary entry dated 27 October 1834, Michelet noted the value of "biographizing" history: "The intimate method: simplify, turn history into a biography [*biographier l'histoire*], of a man, of myself" (*Journal,* 1:161). Three years later, he described his *Origines du droit français* (1837) as a "legal biography of mankind, from birth to death" (*Oeuvres complètes,* 3:606). The idea of biographizing history was worked out in fictional form in Virginia Woolf's historical fantasy *Orlando* (1928), where an impossibly long-lived androgyne witnesses the development of English society from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Another variation on "biographization" is to be found in Power's *Medieval People* (1924), which focuses on a number of individuals (some fictitious, some real) in order to exemplify medieval culture.

103. Michelet, *La sorcière,* ed. Viallaneix, 139.

104. See Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction,* 110–16, for an introduction to the basic features of free indirect discourse. For a historical survey of its development, see Pascal, *The Dual Voice.*

105. Kusters shows that Louandre's *La sorcellerie* (1853) was an important, though unmentioned, model for Michelet for passages of book 1; see *La sorcière,* ed. Kusters, 44, 51–54.

106. Another important source noted by Kusters is Charles Nodier's "Trilby" (1822), a fictional attempt to represent popular beliefs. *La sorcière,* ed. Kusters, 44–45.

107. This hypothetical mode can also be found in Amédée Thierry's *Histoire des Gaulois* (1828). Another attempt to "biographize" history, this work is presented as a "biography that has as its hero one of those collective characters known as *peoples*" (1:i, xi). I discuss Thierry's use of metaphor in my "Mixed Metaphors and the Writing of History." As this recourse to metaphor and approximation indicates, representing groups was one of the principal challenges facing these post-Revolutionary historians (see also Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation*, 103–36).

108. The image of a "permanent scaffold" has been borrowed from Pomian, "Histoire et fiction," 137: "[I]n history—a building that is never finished—the scaffolding is taken down only to make place for a new one."

109. For an excellent survey of the reception of the work, see Michelet, *La sorcière*, ed. Kusters, 65–78. Milsand's article in the *Revue des deux mondes* was particularly eloquent on the idea that, while imagination is necessary to the writing of history, and while Michelet in his other works had managed to use his imagination to illuminate the past, *La sorcière* was a self-indulgent bridge too far.

110. L. T. May, in Michelet, *La Sorcière: The Witch of the Middles Ages*, vii.

111. Gossman, *Between History and Literature*, 200.

112. Jakobson ("Closing Statement") and Mukařovský] ("Standard Language and Poetic Language") explain the value attached to the literary artifact—the text itself—by the way in which the language and composition draw attention to themselves. Approaching the same phenomenon from a different perspective, Gadamer explains the importance of the literary artifact by its semantic richness. "Text und Interpretation" (1983), in *Wahrheit und Methode*, 2:336–60.

113. According to Smithson, the *Récits* are now "appreciated more for their literary and aesthetic worth than for their historicity" (*Augustin Thierry*, 244).

114. Duby and Perrot, *A History of Women in the West*, 1:xviii. Carrard also notes the use of preset temporal divisions in a number of other recently published multivolume histories (*Poetics of the New History*, 52–53). He points out, furthermore, that Braudel's model of time, for all its novelty as an explanatory model, lends itself to a tripartite division of discourse that is itself very traditional. On this Braudelian model and its imitation by later historians, see ibid., 47–62. It is interesting to note that Braudel, by finishing his history of the Mediterranean with the death of Philip II, used the biographical model, albeit ironically, to bring his history to a close.

115. Duby, Perrot, eds., *A History of Women in the West*, xx. The example of Robert Musil, whose novelistic magnum opus was never completed, had been invoked in another collective history of women with many of the same contributors: Dufrancatel et al., *L'histoire sans qualités*.

116. It would be interesting to study in detail how the *inventio* or discovery of one topic leads to another on the basis of some conceptual link; thus Alain Corbin's history of smell (*Le miasme et la jonquille*, 1982) was followed by a history of sound (*Les cloches de la terre*, 1994). Philippe Ariès's history of childhood, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (1973), was followed by Georges Minois's *Histoire de la vieillesse en Occident* (1987). It is also interesting to consider how certain types of topics become paradigmatic, leading to the production of series on the lines of "X and Y in place Z" or "Everyday life in place A during B."

117. Carrard, *Poetics of the New History*, 47–62.

118. Stone, "The Revival of Narrative," 19. As Carrard points out, discussions of narrative by Hayden White among others have often been premised on the classical

realist novel and ignored the fact that modern novels, while far from formless, are more loosely constructed and have a weaker form of closure than their predecessors. *Poetics of the New History*, 76.

119. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 548.

120. Perrot, *From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, 5. The continuing influence of the nineteenth-century novel can also be seen in Barbara Hanawalt's *Growing up in Medieval London* (1993), which opens with a fictional procession into London, reminiscent of the opening of *Ivanhoe* and *Notre-Dame de Paris.* Raphael Samuel has pointed out that the contemporary interest in details regarding everyday life is similar to the "grainy realism of new-wave writing and photography in the 1960s or even to an Audenesque excitement in juxtaposing the epic and the everyday" (*Theatres of Memory*, 441). Carlo Ginzburg ("Microhistory") has also referred to the influence of the writings of Raymond Queneau on his generation of historians. Influence may travel too in the other direction, from historians to creative writers. On the influence of Guglielmo Ferrero on James Joyce, see Spoo, "Joyce's Attitudes toward History."

121. Laslett, "Elusive Intimacy."

122. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, viii. Eric Hobsbawm also presents the idea of writing a grassroots history, which would shift attention from the rulers to ordinary people, as a typically twentieth-century phenomenon ("History from Below," 13). Both Ginzburg and Hobsbawm quote Bertolt Brecht's question "Who built Thebes of the seven gates?" as symptomatic of a sea change in representations of the past.

123. Peardon, *The Transition in English Historical Writing*, 12. Brook Thomas (*The New Historicism*, 234) has commented on the number of references to "New History" in the 1910s and 1920s.

124. Kelley, *Versions of History from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, 14. The list of names (Voltaire, Chateaubriand, Guizot, Simiand, and Michelet) cited by Jacques Le Goff ("L'histoire nouvelle," 222–27) as predecessors for the *nouvelle histoire* is very short, and suggests isolated pockets of genial activity, rather than any broad-based interest. There seems less reluctance to recognize novelists as pioneers, either because there is less professional rivalry at stake or because it was indeed the novelists who had succeeded best in making certain topics representable. Carlo Ginzburg, for example, acknowledges the role of novelists like Balzac and Manzoni in the development of cultural history, but gives the impression that there were no historiographic attempts made in the same period to go beyond battles: "A century needed to pass before historians began to take up the challenges issued by the great novelists of the nineteenth century—from Balzac to Manzoni, from Stendhal to Tolstoy—confronting previously disregarded fields of research with the aid of more subtle and complex explanatory models than the traditional ones." "Proofs and Possibilities," 121.

125. Duby, *History of Private Life*, 1:vii.

126. Kelley, *Versions of History from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, 500; Kelley, "History as a Calling"; Vivanti, "Les recherches de la France d'Etienne Pasquier." Francis Haskell also refers to a number of earlier attempts to extend the range of history (*History and Its Images*, 201–16).

127. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 581–82.

128. Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," 253.

129. In her study of amateur historians in the nineteenth century, *The Gender of History*, Bonnie Smith links an interest in everyday experience and alternative ways of communicating about the past to the socially and intellectual marginalized tradition

of women's writing. Many of the features she identifies as characteristic of women amateur historians also characterize, as I have shown here, male historians working at a time when the differences between professional and amateur were in the process of being defined.

130. For a critique of the "overvaluation" of nonelitist cultural history at the present time, see LaCapra, *History and Criticism,* 71–72. In his statistical survey of French history in the period 1976–1990, Schaeper shows that cultural/intellectual history accounted for 63 percent of the French history written by American historians, for 32 percent of the French history written in France (the figures for 1976 are 20 percent and 16 percent respectively). While these figures suggest a rapid increase in interest in cultural history, they should be set in the perspective of the statistics relating to 1901, which Pim den Boer provides in *History as a Profession,* 33. These suggest that no less than 25.9 percent of all historical works published in France in 1901 related to intellectual history, literary history, and art history. Since then, not only has the idea of cultural history been extended beyond elite culture, but literary and art history have effectively ceased to be branches of history "proper." Some of the current renegotiations of the disciplinary boundaries are discussed in Chapter 4.

3. Sublimity

1. Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art,* especially 246–54.

2. On the incompleteness of fictional worlds, see Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory,* especially 114–22. The discussion bears on the ontology of fictional beings and on the attitudes that logically follow from their recognition *as* fiction (see on this point, ibid., 143). Whereas characters are real persons from the "internal perspective" of the story, they are "mental entities" from the "external perspective" of informed readers; on these distinctions, see Lamarque, *Fictional Points of View,* 23–39.

3. The use of impossible points of view and impossible spatial configurations exemplifies the artificiality of fictional worlds (Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory,* 175–230). In his *Heterocosmica,* Lubomír Doležel insists on the antimimetic nature of fiction and criticizes that "very popular mode of reading that converts fictional persons into live people, imaginary settings into actual places, invented stories into real-life happenings. Mimetic reading, practiced by naive readers and reinforced by journalistic critics, is one of the most reductive operations of which the human mind is capable" (x).

4. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge,* 149–81.

5. Hampson, "History and Fiction," 4.

6. Perrot, *From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War,* 5. It is interesting to note here that E. M. Forster defined realism as the illusion that "more" could be said regarding the particular characters, i.e., that they have a "full" life outside the sentences describing them: "[The novelist] may not choose to tell us all he knows—many of the facts, even of the kind we call obvious, may be hidden. But he will give us the feeling that though the character has not been explained, it is explicable." *Aspects of the Novel,* 70.

7. The phrase "absent from history" is borrowed from Certeau's eponymous *L'absent de l'histoire.* See also Ermarth, *Sequel to History:* "[T]he tellable time of realism and its consensus become the untellable time of postmodern writing" (6). In his *La condi-*

tion postmoderne, Jean-François Lyotard defined postmodern science as research into points of instability ("recherche des instabilités"), in which seeking out the unintelligible plays a crucial part (88). More generally, Sureau, *Qu'est-ce qu'on ne sait pas?* (the proceedings of a UNESCO-sponsored conference held in 1995), reflects the current interest among philosophers in the limits of knowledge.

8. Corbin, *Le monde retrouvé de Louis-François Pinagot,* 8. Michelet would have been pleased to hear his own words echoed so closely: "I have given to many others the help I will need myself. I have exhumed them for a second life.... [History] gives new life to those who are dead, resurrects them. Her justice thus ... compensates those who lived only for a moment and then disappeared." *Histoire du dix-neuvième siècle* (1872), ed. Bernard Leuillot, *Oeuvres complètes,* 21:268.

9. Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?" 337. On the Kantian basis of Lyotard's concept of the sublime, see Crowther, *Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism,* 134–52. Keith Jenkins provides a lucid introduction to the implications of postmodernist philosophy, including the work of Lyotard, for theories on history in his *Why History?* Echoing many of the points made here, he observes that there "will always be an infinite excess, an interminable gap and play between the ideality of history per se (the genus) and any specific history (species)," 88.

10. See for example Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation;* also Kellner, " 'Never Again' Is Now"; Braun, "The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation"; LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust;* Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience.*

11. Spiegel, *The Past as Text,* 34–43. A similar point has been made by the literary historian Ralph Cohen: "We live with the consciousness of what has been repressed, and despite our desire to expose the repressed, there always remains a remnant that eludes us. This compels us to recognize that our version of history, while it inevitably exposes that which has been repressed, nevertheless leaves us with incomplete knowledge of history and ourselves as historians." "Generating Literary Histories," 39.

12. In this emphasis on ignorance, Carlyle echoes some of the preoccupations of his contemporary William Hamilton, who argued in 1829, in his review of Cousin's *Cours de philosophie,* that a "learned ignorance" was "the most difficult acquirement of knowledge" (221). On Hamilton's concept of nescience, see also his *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature,* 591–97. I am grateful to Ralph Jessop for having drawn my attention to the background of Carlyle's preoccupations in the Scottish Enlightenment.

13. Fritz Stern, for example, summed up Carlyle's views with the adage "history is biography." *The Varieties of History,* 90.

14. Carlyle, "On History" (1830), in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 2:255.

15. "These Historical Novels have taught all men this truth, which looks like a truism, and yet was as good as unknown to writers of history and others, till so taught: that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state-papers, controversies and abstractions of men. Not abstractions were they, no diagrams and theorems; but men, in buff or other coats and breeches, with colour in their cheeks, with passions in their stomach, and the idioms, features and vitalities of very men. It is a little word this; inclusive of great meaning! History will henceforth have to take thought of it. Her faint hearsays of 'philosophy teaching by experience' will have to exchange themselves everywhere for direct inspection and embodiment." Carlyle, "Sir Walter Scott" (1838), in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 6:71–72.

16. Ibid., 6:52.

17. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,* 1:6.

18. Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire,* 51. Carlyle, "On History," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 2:257–58; on this passage, see also White, *Metahistory,* 147–49.

19. Johann Beckmann, *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Erfindungen* (1786–1805); Antoine-Yves Goguet, *De l'origine des lois, des arts et des sciences, et de leurs progrès chez les anciens peuples.* See Carlyle, "On History," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 2:263.

20. Ibid., 263. Peter Novick discusses some of the negative effects of increased specialization in *That Noble Dream,* 583; Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob (*Telling the Truth about History,* 158–59) discuss how the increase in the number of group histories has led to a loss of belief in the notion of a unified national history (an idea they themselves then try to rehabilitate). On alternative ways of relating micro- and macro history, see, for example, Ginzburg, "Microhistory," and more recently, Egmond and Mason, *The Mammoth and the Mouse.*

21. For a more recent treatment of the question of the relationship between biography and history, see Revel, "L'histoire au ras le sol"; Levi, "Les usages de la biographie"; Le Goff, "After *Annales.*"

22. Carlyle, "On History," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 2:259 (my emphasis).

23. Carlyle, "On Biography" (1832), in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 4:60–61.

24. As if to emphasize the extent to which experience is *lost* to silence and darkness, Carlyle follows up his discussion of Clarendon with a comparable incident from James Boswell's famous biography of Dr. Johnson in which the learned man is briefly accosted by a prostitute in the street; then the "wretched one, seen but for the twinkling of an eye, passes on into the utter Darkness." Ibid., 4:62.

25. Carlyle, "On History," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 2:256.

26. As Linda Orr writes, Michelet was one of the first historians to be obsessed with the "unreadable" and "unthinkable" nature of his profession's objects (*Jules Michelet,* xi). On Michelet's belief in his own powers to mediate between past and present, see Gossman, "Jules Michelet and Romantic Historiography," in *Between History and Literature,* 152–200.

27. Carlyle, "On History," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 2:256.

28. Carlyle, "On History Again" (1833), in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 4:213.

29. Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire,* 265–67; Carlyle, *Past and Present,* 43.

30. Macaulay, "History," 304.

31. On the more general tendency within romanticism to locate relevance in unspectacular phenomena, see Kroeber, "Romantic Historicism." It is interesting in this regard to compare Carlyle's fascination with the apparently trivial detail with Horace Walpole's elitist rejection of them. Walpole wrote in March 1780: "A barbarous Country, so remote from the seat of empire, and occupied with a few legions that very rarely decided any great events, is not very interesting, though one's own country—nor do I care a straw for the stone that preserves the name of a standard bearer of a cohort, or of a colonel's daughter." Quoted in J. Levine, *Humanism and History,* 104–5.

32. Carlyle, "On History Again," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 4:216.

33. On the concept of *fait divers,* see the section devoted to "Fait divers, fait d'histoire," *Annales* 38.4 (1983): 821–919, especially Michelle Perrot, "Fait divers et histoire au XIXe siècle (Note critique)." Joel Fineman, "The History of the Anecdote," also discusses anecdotes as indicators of what a narrative has ignored. Carlyle's emphasis on "the glimpse" as a methodological principle was echoed recently in Simon Schama's

Dead Certainties, where the historian is "doomed to be forever hailing someone who has just gone around the corner and out of earshot" (320) and having to make do with "flickering glimpses of dead worlds" (326).

34. "Whatever its other aspects, the everyday has this essential trait: it allows no hold. It escapes. It belongs to insignificance, and the insignificant is without truth, without reality, without secret, but perhaps also the site of all possible signification." Blanchot, "Everyday Speech," 14.

35. Carlyle, "On Biography," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 4:60.

36. Zimmerman, *The Boundaries of Fiction,* 214.

37. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,* 1:6.

38. Ibid., 1:2.

39. When it first appeared in 1819, *Ivanhoe* contained a dedicatory epistle written by the imaginary Laurence Templeton to his fellow antiquary "the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust, F.A.S." For a contemporary account of the lamentable state of the archive, see Nicolas, *Observations on the State of Historical Literature.* On the attempts made in this period to make research materials available, see Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional,* 101–34.

40. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,* 1:3.

41. Anthony Grafton discusses Ranke's enthusiasm for archival work (*The Footnote,* 34–61, esp. 35–36). More generally, on nineteenth-century representations of the archive, see B. G. Smith, *The Gender of History,* 116–29. On Carlyle's research methods, see especially Trela, *A History of Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,"* 178–79. Gooch comments that when Carlyle began his historiographical career, "the study of the archives had not begun, and it never occurred to him that he ought to begin it" (*History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century,* 303). In one of the earliest drafts of his book on Cromwell, Carlyle warned the reader against going back to the original records: "[M]uch I have read which no following son of Adam will ever more read; and in all this there is nothing visible but an indecipherable universe filled as with dirty indecipherable London fog." Quoted in "A Preface by Carlyle and by the Editors," in Fielding and Tarr, *Carlyle Past and Present,* 18. Carlyle's dislike of archival spadework in the less than ideal conditions of his time should not blind us to the amount of information he managed to gather from printed sources, particularly in *The French Revolution* (1837) and the *History of Friedrich II. of Prussia called Frederick the Great* (1858–65); nor should it be forgotten that Carlyle was interested in nontextual evidence, making a point among other things of visiting the relevant battlefields while working on his Frederick the Great. See Kaplan, *Thomas Carlyle,* 389, 416–19.

42. According to Trela, Carlyle's interest in understanding the ideas driving Cromwell was stimulated in part by his reading of Scott's *Woodstock* (1826) and *Old Mortality;* Trela, *A History of Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,"* 29. Réizov (*L'historiographie romantique française,* 88) suggests that Abel-François Villemain was similarly inspired by Scott, and in particular by *Old Mortality,* in writing his *Histoire de Cromwell* (1819).

43. Carlyle, "On History," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 2:258.

44. Carlyle, *The French Revolution,* 1:29.

45. See Trela, *A History of Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,"* 14.

46. On the laborious and protracted writing of the biography of Frederick, see Rosenberg, *Carlyle and the Burden of History,* 159–63. A work of some four thousand pages, Gooch described it as "too long for its readers, as it was too long for its author." *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century,* 309.

47. Quoted in Trela, *A History of Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,"* 18.

48. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,* 1:5.

49. Carlyle, "Sir Walter Scott," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 6:72.

50. Carlyle, *The French Revolution,* 2:131. See also ibid., 2:227. "Standing wistfully on the safe shore, we will look, and see what is of interest to us, what is adapted to us." Also Carlyle's "Parliamentary History of the French Revolution" (1837) in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 6:2: "Each individual takes up the Phenomenon according to his own point of vision, to the structure of his optic organs.... And the Phenomenon, for its part, subsists there, all the while, unaltered; waiting to be pictured as often as you like, its entire meaning not to be compressed into any picture drawn by men."

51. "The history of the Irish War ... does not form itself into a picture; but remains only as a huge blot, an indiscriminate blackness; which the human memory cannot willingly charge itself with! ... All these plunging and tumbling [factions]...have made of Ireland and its affairs the black unutterable blot we speak of." Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,* 2:43. To be sure, the 1640s posed notoriously intractable problems for historians of Ireland; see on this point, Mac Cuarta, *Ulster 1641,* esp. Toby Barnard, "1641: A Bibliographical Essay," 173–86. Elsewhere, Carlyle suggested that this intractability is paradigmatic of Irish history as a whole; in conversations with Charles Gavan Duffy, for example, he claimed that Ireland "presented to one's mind only interminable confusion and chaos, or if there might...be a ground-plan more or less intelligible, it was not worth searching for." The only period of Irish history worth writing about was the early medieval period, when Ireland "was a sort of model school for the nations, and in verity an island of saints." *Conversations with Carlyle,* 102. In 1849 Carlyle did seriously consider writing his next book on Ireland and for this purpose undertook a tour of the island; see Kaplan, *Thomas Carlyle,* 334–47. All that came of this plan were his rather desultory, dyspeptic, and posthumously published *Reminiscences of My Irish Journey in 1849* (1882). As Kaplan puts it, "No one and nothing allowed him to make 'cosmos' out of the 'chaos' of his ideas and feelings about Ireland" (351). It is interesting to note here that Irish writers of this period tended to agree with Carlyle that Irish history was formless—"a dream-like succession of capricious and seemingly unconnected changes, without order or progress," as James and Freeman Wills put it—but they interpreted this chronic disorder in the light of the need for national autonomy; quoted in Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination,* 155–56.

52. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," 30.

53. See, for example, his account of the encampment of women around Versailles on 5 October 1789: "Insurrectionary Chaos lies slumbering round the Palace, like Ocean round a Diving-Bell." Carlyle, *The French Revolution,* 1:251. The tendency to cross over from the epistemological to the ontological domain is also to be seen in Carlyle's renaming of individuals and situations in terms of what they stood for. Thus Danton is described as a "Reality" and Robespierre as a "Formula." Ibid., 2:334. Thus Cromwell's policies in Ireland are described, from what seems to be the perspective of Cromwell himself, as "the truth" and as "a Gospel of Veracity," while "Ireland is still a terrible dubiety, to itself and to us!" *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches,* 2:150–51.

54. Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History,* 15.

55. According to P. Levine (*The Amateur and the Professional,* 3), Carlyle wrote himself out of the history of the historical discipline. Instead, he enjoyed immense prestige during his lifetime as a general commentator or "Prophet," a status reflected among other things in the place accorded him in the National Portrait Gallery; see

G. B. Tennyson, "Carlyle Today," in Fielding and Tarr, *Carlyle Past and Present,* 27–50. The assessment among professional historians has been equivocal, with the impression given that Carlyle's work as a historian is good in spots. Although his scholarship in certain works is found to be very much at fault and his style is found indigestible in large quantities, he is nevertheless allowed by some to have written passages of insight. His history of the French Revolution continues to be praised for the vividness of its portraiture (see, for example, Richard Cobb's introduction to the Folio edition, London, 1989). He is also generally considered to have been a major influence in the emergence of a revised view of Cromwell—see, for example, Mason, "Nineteenth-Century Cromwell"; Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism,* 145–46.

56. "Nowadays to call the unemployed 'marginals' is to recreate the old mechanisms of exclusion . . ." Farge, "Le mendiant, un marginal?" 328. Combining the question with the ellipsis, Jean Lacouture ends his *Jesuits: A Multibiography* by first listing a number of questions that had been raised by the readers of the first part as to why such clever men should have joined the Society, and then answering those questions in the form of a series of new ones (498). Carrard analyzes the use of quotation marks as part of a rhetoric of uncertainty in recent historiography (*Poetics of the New History,* 181–87).

57. "[Microhistories] possess a self-referential capacity very similar to the means of expression used by the relevant modern painters. Just as in modern painting, the aim is no longer to hint at a 'reality' behind the representation, but to absorb 'reality' into the representation itself." Ankersmit, *History and Tropology,* 123.

58. As far as the familiar fragmented-manuscript-in-a-cupboard is concerned, it is interesting to note that Scott used this device to finish off Strutt's *Queenhoo Hall* (see Chapter 2). Ellipsis was common in the eighteenth century, where it was used above all to reinforce the realism of a fiction by suggesting that it is impossible or libellous to reveal "all" of the matter at hand; see P. Stewart's *Imitation and Illusion in the French Memoir-Novel.* The use of the question mark to simulate the existence of a residue seems of more recent date; for an extensive use of this device, see for example, Graham Swift's novel *Waterland* (1983), which replaces the indicative mode of narrative by a series of questions about the "unknown" lives of his imaginary characters (see 78–81).

59. For a historical overview of theories of the sublime, see Monk, *The Sublime.* For an overview of recent discussions, see the special issue of *New Literary History* 16 (1985); Pries, *Das Erhabene;* Crowther, *Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism* and *The Kantian Sublime;* Courtine at al., *Of the Sublime.* Peter de Bolla (*The Discourse of the Sublime*) distinguishes between particular descriptions of sublime experiences and the ongoing public discourse about the nature of such experiences. The latter ends up providing guidelines for "producing" sublimity according to certain models (12).

60. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful,* 55, 43–44.

61. In a rare discussion of the connection between historicism and the sublime, Karl Kroeber concurs that the historicist commitment to recapturing an experience that was by definition transitional left the historian "in the position of representing what he recognizes cannot be represented." "Romantic Historicism," 164–65. Without referring specifically to the sublime, Azade Seyhan does argue that the historicist awareness of the alterity of the past was a major stimulus to the romantic reflection on representation (*Representation and Its Discontents,* esp. 10).

62. Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism,* 1:124.

63. Challenging the assumption that aesthetic and political preferences are necessarily linked, Ronald Paulson ("Versions of a Human Sublime") criticized the correlation of beauty and repressive politics, on the one hand, and sublimity and subversive politics, on the other. For the reiteration of this same basic criticism from a different perspective, see Pries, *Das Erhabene,* 12. Dominick LaCapra has criticized Lyotard for excessively valorizing the sublime and for failing to distinguish between its different forms and modalities (*Representing the Holocaust,* 97–98).

64. White, *The Content of the Form,* 58–82.

65. Ibid., 74; his quotation from Carlyle's essay "On History" is on p. 229.

66. White, *Metahistory,* 148.

67. There is arguably a structural tension between sublimity and the "desublimating" effect of discourse in the sense that the deliberate evocation of sublimity sits oddly with the function of discourse in making sense of the world. In his review of her *Fragile Lives,* for example, David Garrich rejects Arlette Farge's stated reluctance to draw conclusions as "disingenuous," since in fact she does interpret the past and define it under the guise of not trying to do so (725). See also Hans Kellner, "Beautifying the Nightmare," an analysis of Simon Schama's *Citizens;* also Friedlander's comments on the deceptively fragmentary composition of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Hitler: Ein Film aus Deutschland,* in *Probing the Limits of Representation,* 14–16.

68. Quoted in Butterfield, *Man on His Past,* 218.

69. Carlyle, *Past and Present,* 39; further references in the text.

70. In his narrative of the quarrel in 1199 between the abbot and the monk, for example, Jocelin explicitly criticizes Samson for taking action ill calculated to promote harmony in the community, criticism which is left out of Carlyle's account. *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond,* 103–6.

71. Jocelin, *Chronicle,* 137. On the composition of *Past and Present,* see also Calder, *The Writing of "Past and Present."*

72. The very fact that the invocation of the sublime should be susceptible to conventionalization points to the quiet imperialism of literary forms—what Linda Orr calls "the revenge of literature"—which ensures that our representations of the world tend to follow the tracks beaten out by earlier accounts. Orr, "The Revenge of Literature."

73. De Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime,* 20–21, 59–102.

4. Literature and the Longing for History

1. Certeau, *The Writing of History,* 94.

2. Collingwood, *The Idea of History,* 259. A similar image is used by Certeau: "Through 'quotations,' references, notes, and the whole mechanism of permanent references to a prime language (what Michelet called the 'chronicle'), historiographical discourse is constructed as *knowledge of the other.* It is constructed according to a problematic of procedure and trail, or of *citation,* that can at the same time 'subpoena' a referential language that acts therein as reality, and judge it in the name of knowledge." *The Writing of History,* 94.

3. The rhetoric of footnoting historical sources is described in Grafton, *The Footnote,* especially 1–33. Grafton shows among other things that the symbolic invocation of authorities persisted within the tradition of critical history initiated by Ranke. With reference to more recent practices, see also Carrard, *Poetics of the New History,* 149–67.

4. On the distinction between "documents" and complex texts, see LaCapra, *History and Criticism,* 19–51.

5. Ginzburg, "Checking the Evidence," 83.

6. Certeau, *The Writing of History,* 3.

7. Stock, *Listening for the Text,* 29.

8. Lynn Hunt's introduction to *The New Cultural History* is appropriately entitled "History, Culture, and Text," 1–22.

9. Carrard, *Poetics of the New History,* 152–53.

10. *Annual Review,* quoted in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott,* 7. Scott's comments, ibid.

11. Scott, "Essay on the Imitations of the Ancient Ballad," *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott,* 554–68, especially 558: "But when the license is avowed, and practised without the intention to deceive, it cannot be objected to but by scrupulous pedantry." The principle of *aemulatio,* which dominated literary production before romanticism, coincides with what Lotman calls the "aesthetics of identity"; see Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text,* 24. Stephen Bann has also pointed out the practice of mixing up original artifacts and imitations in Lenoir's Musée des Petits-Augustins (*The Clothing of Clio,* 84). Later critics have not always appreciated such disrespect for "authenticity," a fact exemplified by the changing reputation of Bishop Percy; see Donatelli, "The Percy Folio Manuscript" and "The Medieval Fictions of Thomas Warton and Thomas Percy." Ian Haywood links the controversy around the Percy collection to emerging notions of authenticity and authorship (*Faking It,* 48–49).

12. Bann, *The Clothing of Clio,* 2.

13. See on this theme Fiona Stafford's eye-opening study *The Last of the Race.*

14. As Helen Solterer has shown in a number of studies, the idea that "performance" can be a means to bridge the difference between past and present has been a tenacious one; see "Performing Pasts," and "The Waking of Medieval Theatricality."

15. The idea of display text has been borrowed from Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse,* 132ff. My account of textuality draws on Van Peer, "But What *Is* Literature?"

16. Spiegel, *The Past as Text,* 21–22.

17. On the untimeliness of monuments and of other visual and plastic works of art, see Francis Haskell's wide-ranging *History and Its Images.*

18. Millgate, *Walter Scott,* 10–11, 8–9. On Scott's activities as editor, see Johnston, *Enchanted Ground,* 177–94; also Robertson, *Legitimate Histories,* 145.

19. In France, similar collections were also being published in the 1770s and 1780s. On the work of LaCurne de Sainte-Palaye, see Gossman, *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment;* on Le Grand d'Aussy's editorial work, see Wilson, *A Medievalist in the Eighteenth Century.* Rearick's *Beyond the Enlightenment* traces the historiographical interest in popular literature into the nineteenth century.

20. Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,* 1:2. The reference to "English homes" is in the foreword to *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript.* Le Grand d'Aussy had also presented his collection of "religious tales" and fabliaux as a means to understanding the morals and mind-set of earlier generations. Le Grand d'Aussy, *Contes dévots, fables et romans anciens,* xlv. For more examples of the eighteenth-century interest in the function of literary works as historical documents, see Johnston, *Enchanted Ground,* 24–27.

21. Ritson, *Ancient Songs and Ballads,* [advertisement].

22. [Scott], *Edinburgh Review* 7 (1806): 368; quoted in Millgate, *Walter Scott,* 8.

23. Ginzburg, "Fiction as Evidence." Anthony Grafton has also recently pointed out the importance of philology to the emergence of historicism in the work of Ranke (*The Footnote,* 87–93).

24. Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism,* 1:124. That poetry was perceived as a form of historical representation is indicated by the publication in 1834 of a series of "antiquarian" illustrations to Scott's poetry; as the preface indicated, these illustrations were "intended to convey some idea of the armour, furniture and embellishment of older times." Martin, *Illustrations, Landscape, Historical and Antiquarian, to the Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott.*

25. The idea that poetry was the locus par excellence for "lost" cultures or cultures that had been politically marginalized was echoed with respect to Brittany by the collector vicomte de La Villemarqué. In the preface to his *Barzaz Breiz: Chants populaires de la Bretagne* (1839), described as a "poetic" history of Brittany, he claimed that poetry had "saved" so many of the "intimate details and particular traditions" that had "escaped" from historians.

26. David Lowenthal (*Possessed by the Past*) distinguishes between "heritage" and "history" as two attitudes to beliefs about the past: in the case of heritage, beliefs about the past are unquestioned and serve to affirm identity, whereas an openness to new perspectives is typical of history.

27. Ritson, *Ancient Songs and Ballads,* xxxiv.

28. Scott, "Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry," in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott,* 543.

29. Spiegel, *The Past as Text,* xxi. On the historical artifact as a focus for longing, see Susan Stewart's provocative account of antiquarianism in *On Longing.*

30. P. Stewart, "This Is Not a Book Review," 537. Many of Stewart's arguments echo those of David Perkins, whose *Is Literary History Possible?* claims, from the perspective of literary criticism, that the study of literature is incompatible with historiography.

31. Examples of the use of paintings as sources can be found in Simon Schama's *Dead Certainties* (Benjamin West) and Arlette Farge's *Les fatigues de la guerre* (Watteau).

32. Le Roy Ladurie, *Jasmin's Witch,* 30. The attractiveness of a nonjudicial source becomes more obvious in light of the avowed difficulties Carlo Ginzburg had in reconstructing the worldview of a heretical peasant on the basis of official court proceedings in *The Cheese and the Worms.*

33. Le Roy Ladurie, *Jasmin's Witch,* 30.

34. Carrard, *Poetics of the New History,* 152–53.

35. Le Roy Ladurie, *Love, Death, and Money in the Pays d'Oc,* 35.

36. Ibid. 508.

37. Barthes, "Littérature et signification" (1963), in *Essais critiques,* 265.

38. On Ankersmit's discussion of historical writing before the advent of postmodernism, see especially *History and Tropology,* 9–17; for his discussion of postmodernism, see especially ibid., 162–81.

39. Norman Hampson also used the form of a fictional dialogue in *The Life and Opinions of Maximilien Robespierre* (1974), as a way of drawing attention to the difficulties involved in reducing all the different points of view on Robespierre to a single truth about him.

40. N. Davis, *Women on the Margins,* 212. Further references in the text.

41. Davis's focus on "marginal" individuals as a way into investigating the structure of European society at a particular point in time recalls Ginzburg's apologia in

"Microhistory" for the study of the "exceptionally normal" as an alternative form of representativity.

42. According to Frank Kermode's analysis of biblical exegesis, interpreting a text involves both the resolution and the production of enigmas (*The Genesis of Secrecy*).

43. Carlyle, *Past and Present,* 121; Michelet, *La sorcière,* ed. Viallaneix, 139.

44. Ankersmit, "Historicism," 161.

45. For a critical survey of the concept of "experience" in contemporary discussions, see J. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience" and "After History?"

46. Schutte, review of *Women on the Margins,* 349.

47. Ankersmit, *History and Tropology,* 179.

48. Jenkins, *Why History?* 162.

49. Lucette Valensi has recently attributed a particular role to historians in working through collective traumas by bringing together, though not necessarily reconciling, different points of view on the events ("Whose trauma?").

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